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RELIGION  
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From dramas to comedies, there was plenty of entertainment

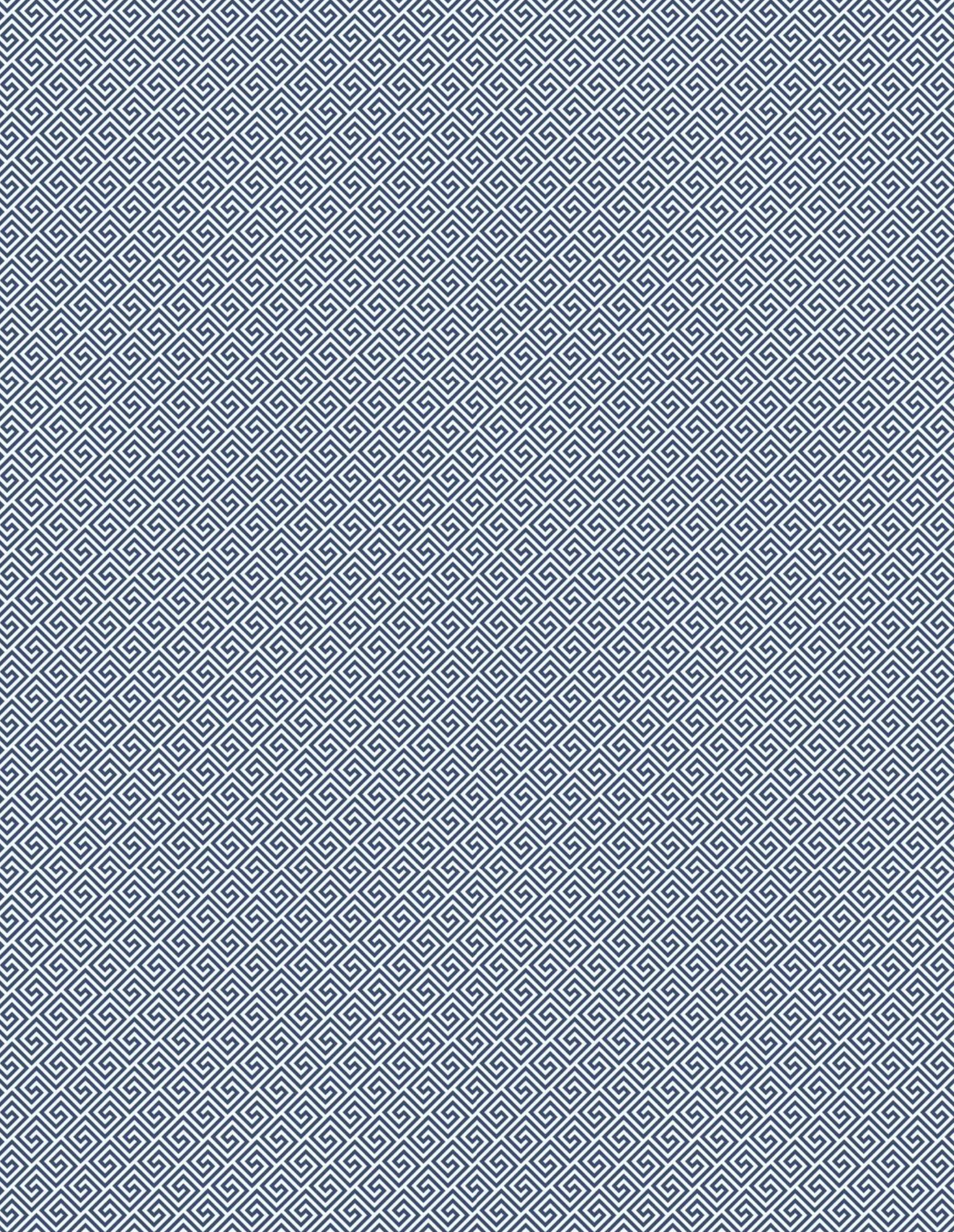
## SPARTA TO ATHENS

Take a tour through the city-states that made up Ancient Greece

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Uncover the unrivalled craftsmanship behind pots, sculptures and more







# WELCOME

**S**itting on top of the tallest hill in Athens, dominating the skyline, is a complex of buildings. Thousands of years old, today they serve as a reminder of a civilisation that once ruled the Mediterranean.

Back then, they were part and parcel of the architecture of the Ancient Greek world.

In Everything You Need to Know About Ancient Greece, uncover how life was lived in Athens, Sparta and beyond, and what it was really like to worship the Olympians. Explore the myths and legends, from the founding of Athens to Odysseus' run-in with a cyclops, and run with ancient athletes at the first-ever Olympic Games.

The Ancient Greeks have influenced the modern world more than you think - turn the page to find out what we owe to our predecessors.



「 FUTURE 」



 **EVERYTHING**   
YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT

# ANCIENT GREECE

Future PLC Quay House, The Ambury, Bath, BA1 1UA

**Bookazine Editorial**

Editor **Katharine Marsh**

Designer **Briony Duguid**

Senior Art Editor **Andy Downes**

Head of Art & Design **Greg Whitaker**

Editorial Director **Jon White**

**All About History Editorial**

Editor **Jonathan Gordon**

Art Editor **Kym Winters**

Editor in Chief **Tim Williamson**

Senior Art Editor **Duncan Crook**

**Photography**

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**Advertising**

Media packs are available on request

Commercial Director **Clare Dove**

**International**

Head of Print Licensing **Rachel Shaw**

licensing@futurenet.com

www.futurecontenthub.com

**Circulation**

Head of Newstrade **Tim Mathers**

**Production**

Head of Production **Mark Constance**

Production Project Manager **Matthew Eglinton**

Advertising Production Manager **Joanne Crosby**

Digital Editions Controller **Jason Hudson**

Production Managers **Keely Miller, Nola Cokely,**

**Vivienne Calvert, Fran Twentyman**

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Chief executive **Zillah Byng-Thorne**  
Non-executive chairman **Richard Huntingford**  
Chief financial officer **Penny Ladkin-Brand**

Tel +44 (0)1225 442 244

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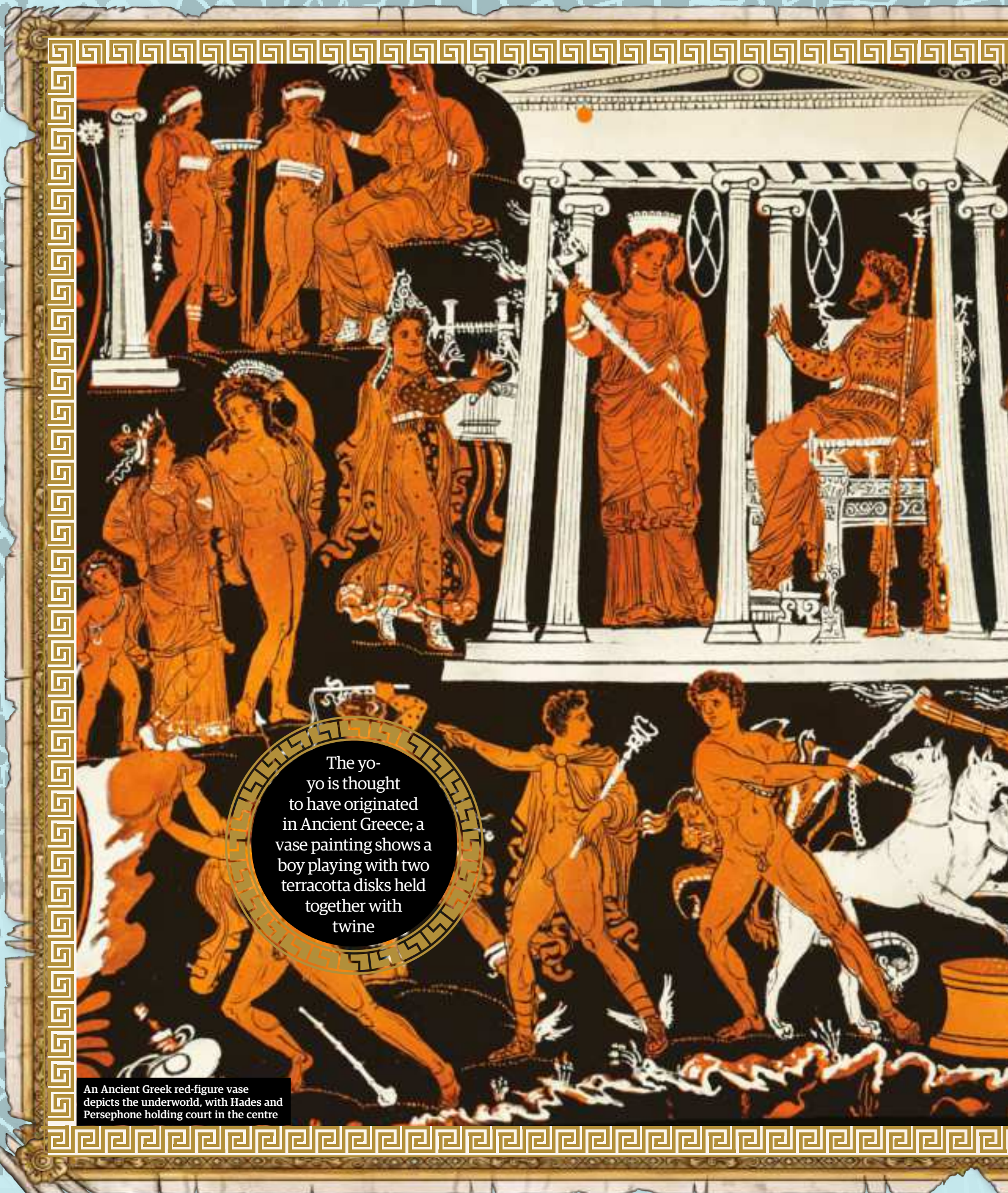
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The yo-yo is thought to have originated in Ancient Greece; a vase painting shows a boy playing with two terracotta disks held together with twine

An Ancient Greek red-figure vase depicts the underworld, with Hades and Persephone holding court in the centre



# THE BEGINNINGS OF ANCIENT GREECE

From the dark beginnings of human civilisation, Greece has been a fascinating country on the forefront of human development in the West

**A**ncient Greece, with its multitude of different cultures and peoples, has long been seen as the cradle of Western civilisation. Having reached the heights of almost all aspects of human learning, Greece was at the heart of the ancient world, and formed the basis for much of Western society's science, politics, philosophy, drama and more.

When exploring Ancient Greece, it is worth noting that the people, as well as modern-day Greeks, had a different name for their land: Hellas. The name comes from the mythical progenitor of the Greek race, a man named Hellen (not Helen of Troy), but it is not known when he is supposed to have been born, or even if he existed.

The mixing of myth and legend, especially in the early years, was not uncommon in the Greek world. Today we have a great many explanations for all manner of natural phenomena, and our understanding of science and medicine is far more advanced than those who inhabited the ancient world. For them, the divine was a way to explain the unknown, and so early Greek history is directly linked to their religious and mythical beliefs.

Greece's geography can certainly be seen as an inspiration for these beliefs, with tall, majestic mountains making up 80% of the landmass, but it is also home to rugged coastlines and rolling fertile plains. While offering unrivalled views, the mountains made overland travel difficult, so the Greeks took to the sea for transportation and trade.

While connected by water, local communities often found themselves isolated by the topography, leading to the formation of independent city-states and communities. These would be built up around a central citadel, which - being situated on high ground - would offer a better vantage point to spot incoming raiders or invaders. These eventually became known as acropolises, with the most famous example found in Athens.

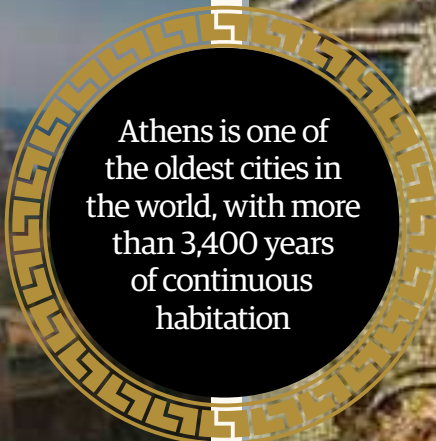
Archaeological finds point to human settlement in Greece dating back to the Neolithic era. The early settlers and ancestors of the Greek people migrated through Russia and down into the northern part of the country in around 4000 BCE. The population then spread across the land to found part of the Aegean civilisation, who were fishermen and traders based out of the islands of







An 18th-century depiction of ancient Athens with the Acropolis and agora visible



Athens is one of the oldest cities in the world, with more than 3,400 years of continuous habitation

the Aegean Sea. They flourished from 3200 to 1100 BCE, and provide evidence for continued human habitation of the area.

Around the same time, 2700 to 1500 BCE, the Minoan civilisation came to be active on the island of Crete. Experts believe the island was flooded after a natural disaster, and this has often pointed to the beginnings of the Atlantis myth.

Later, the Mycenaean civilisation, which borrowed much from the Minoans, took shape. The Mycenaeans were the first to speak Greek, and they ruled from 1650 to 1200 BCE. Later Greeks would hold them in high regard, awed by the massive stone citadels they constructed. So vast were the stones that they were named 'Cyclopean walls', after the one-eyed mythical monster, as it was thought only giants could have moved such weight. The mixing of the Minoan and Mycenaean deities would provide the Greeks with a foundation on which they constructed their own pantheon. The creation myth of the Olympian gods' war and victory over the Titans began in this period.

After the fall of the Mycenaeans came a period known as the Greek Dark Ages, which gained the name because from around 1100 to 800 BCE we have very little in the way of historical documents to tell us what happened. It was during this time that the fabled Trojan War was chronicled by Homer. While the city has been discovered, the exact details of the actual war remain fuzzy, and are so interwoven with mythology that the two have become almost impossible to untangle.

From 800 BCE onwards is when we begin to find more familiar names that we associate with Ancient Greece, with the first being the oracle at Delphi. Serving as a prominent feature in Greek society for more than a thousand years, the oracle would give divine guidance to the rulers of the various city-states on matters of war and politics.

Only a few years later, in 776 BCE, the first Olympic Games was held. Although a far cry from the modern version, and despite only having one event, the games started a competitive tradition that would last



## Trojan War myth

A war fought between the Achaeans and the Trojans, the Trojan War is one of the most influential and well-known pieces of Greek mythology that exists. It is featured in many works of literature, most famously in Homer's *Iliad*, a tale of war, love and betrayal.

The Ancient Greeks believed the war had historical merit, but understood that Homer's account was filled with exaggeration and myth to improve the story. Modern historians and archaeologists have tried to find links in sources of other cultures, like the Egyptians or Hittites, and the consensus seems to be that the conflict took place, but the details – like the cause and outcome – are unfortunately lost to time.

The city of Troy was uncovered on the western tip of Anatolia in the 19th century, and while it is almost certainly the Homeric Troy, no one can say for certain.



A group of artefacts, known as Priam's Treasure, was found at the supposed site of Troy



Ancient Greece contained a strong warrior culture and drive to exceed above all others







Poor farmland would see Greece mostly cultivate olives, grapes and grains (usually wheat and barley), which is known as the 'Mediterranean triad'

A mosaic of Plato's academy discovered in Pompeii



The remains of the Roman Agora in Athens

## The Greek cityscape

While all Greek city-states were unique, common urban architecture would help bind them together. The cityscape of a Greek city would have been familiar to them all: in the centre of the town, on a raised mound, would stand the acropolis, or citadel. The most famous of these is located in Athens, where the Parthenon is, but they can also be found in cities like Corinth and Argos. Religious temples - where pleas to the gods would be made, usually with sacrifices to ensure they were heard - would also dominate the skyline.

At the foot of the acropolis would be the agora, the beating heart of the city. The political buildings would be found here, and it served as a meeting place for the city's great and good. As the agora would be full of life, each Greek city would contain a dedicated cemetery so that the dead could always be laid to rest peacefully. For entertainment, citizens would usually have to travel to the surrounding hills, as the superior acoustics often made them prime spots for open-air theatres.

until the 4th century CE when it was outlawed by the Romans. This is known as the Archaic period of Greek history, and saw a massive expansion in the population of the country and the beginnings of some of its most famous events. This was also an age of colonisation for the Greeks, with settlements cropping up in all the islands of the Aegean Sea and the coastline of Asia Minor, in modern-day Turkey.

Colonies further afield were also founded, driven by the need for food, which could not come from Greece due to its lack of arable land. These included the southern tip of Italy and Sicily, the coastline around the Black Sea, and a few locations on the Iberian and African coast. This was also the time when Greek cities would make the shift from monarchies into republics. Known as poleis, these republics would control the surrounding land. The two great city-states, Athens and Sparta, began their rise to power during this period. Sparta is famous for its intense militaristic society, boasting to have created the toughest soldiers the world has ever seen. In contrast, Athens is

seen as the birthplace of democracy and a slew of influential philosophers.

Next came the Classical period, a golden age of sorts, where grand ideas like democracy really came to the fore, and famous buildings such as the Acropolis and the Parthenon in Athens were built. It was roughly situated between the Persian invasions and the rise and fall of Alexander the Great, and the period plays host to many great names, like Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. It was also a time of warfare, with the titanic Greco-Persian Wars seeing Greece invaded by one of the largest armies ever recorded, and the Peloponnesian War, which saw the Athenian and Spartan empires vie for supremacy over all of Greece.

It wasn't until the 4th century BCE that King Philip of Macedonia began to bind them into one cohesive unit. What Philip started would be completed by his son, Alexander the Great, who crushed all resistance in his path. In his short life span he would carve out a vast empire that would encompass Greece, modern-day Iraq and Iran, the Levant, Egypt, and reach as far as India. Although

it collapsed shortly after his death, it did herald the Hellenistic period, in which Greek culture was spread far and wide throughout the known world.

The fall of Alexander's empire, and its subsequent carving up by his generals, laid the foundation for the rise of Rome. Around 100 years after Alexander's death, in the 2nd century BCE, Greece fell to the military might of the Roman Republic. While Rome was a foreign invader, they were heavily influenced by the Greeks, borrowing some of their gods and some Greek customs.

This was the fall of mainland Greece, but a small pocket of Hellenistic culture, the Ptolemaic dynasty of Egypt, was not overthrown until 30 CE after the naval Battle of Actium. So named after the Macedonian General Ptolemy, the dynasty would fall with Queen Cleopatra, who would take her own life with her lover, Mark Antony.

Despite the overthrow of an independent Greece, Hellenistic culture still spread throughout the Mediterranean Basin and created the basis for the evolution of Western civilisation into how we all live today.



## 8000 - 479 BCE

### Early Greek civilisation

8000-1300 BCE

Early archaeological evidence points to human habitation stretching back to the Neolithic period. Through this and the Bronze Age, the Aegean civilisation comes into being. This is a blanket term for the different groups living on mainland Greece, the Aegean Islands and Crete. With few historical records for them, we rely on archaeological and geographical findings to gain an understanding of them. We know that trade and commerce play a large role in their survival. With farmland being at a premium in Greece, the ability to trade allows these civilisations to sustain themselves.

An 18th-century map of the Aegean Sea and surrounding islands



Philosopher and mathematician Pythagoras instructed his followers not to eat beans, possibly because they contained the souls of the dead

### First Olympic Games

776 BCE

Originating as a festival to honour Zeus, the chief of the gods, the Olympic Games grow into a national pastime that champions the competitive spirit of the Greek people. The first games only have one event, which is a sprint near the sacrificial altar, but soon grow to include many different sports, such as wrestling and chariot racing.

Competitors and spectators flock to the sanctuary at Mount Olympus every four years to watch this spectacle, and it endures almost 1,000 years until it is outlawed by Roman emperor Theodosius, who bans all pagan worship in 393 CE.



Pankration, a brutal form of wrestling with very little rules, was a popular sport in the ancient Olympics

### Destruction of the Minoans

Although theories are disputed, the eruption of Thera, one of the largest volcanic events in recorded history, brings an end to the Minoan civilisation, with a massive tsunami - caused by the eruption - decimating the isle of Crete. c.1600 BCE

### The Trojan War

Recorded in Homer's *Iliad*, the Trojan War is a mix of myth and reality. The Greeks gain victory through deception, infiltrating Troy and brutally sacking it. 1250 BCE

### The Greeks visit Italy

Always on the lookout for new territory and arable farmland, Greek settlers hop over the Mediterranean and found colonies on the southern tip of Italy and Sicily. 750 BCE



8000-1300 BCE

1600 BCE

1400 BCE

1300 BCE

1250 BCE

1100 BCE

776 BCE

750 BCE

730 BCE

727 BCE

### The Sea Peoples appear

Thought to have been made up of a confederacy of tribes from craggy coastlines around the Aegean Sea, the Sea Peoples are savage coastal raiders who cut a bloody swath through the Mediterranean. 1300 BCE

### End of Mycenaean civilisation

Experiencing two massive civil upheavals, the specifics of which are still being debated, the Mycenaean civilisation falls. Theories include a massive seaborne invasion or internal strife that devour the Mycenaeans from the inside. c.1100 BCE

**Greek tragedy**  
Hippomenes, an Athenian magistrate, displays great cruelty when he punishes his daughter's infidelity by yoking the man to his chariot until he dies of exhaustion. He then locks his daughter up with a horse until she too dies. 727 BCE

### The Mycenaean civilisation flourishes

1400 BCE

The Mycenaean civilisation is a precursor to Greek civilisation. From their citadels, the elite of the Mycenaean society flourish. They also have contact with the Minoans of Crete, and the Mycenaeans are influenced by the island culture, especially in the creation of art. The Greeks are in awe of the Mycenaeans. Coupled with advanced drainage and irrigation systems, the Mycenaeans conduct trade throughout the Mediterranean world.

Two female Mycenaean charioteers, possibly warriors, from a fresco discovered in Pylos

Two forces of hoplites, with brightly painted and garish shields, clash

### The Messenian Wars

c.730 BCE

The first in a series of conflicts between Sparta and Messenia. A trade deal turns bloody, and soon a full-scale war is raging. The Spartans win within a year, and gain substantial wealth. Messenia is forcibly depopulated, with its inhabitants either willingly migrating or being enslaved by the Spartans. These slaves later try to rebel against their masters, but they are swiftly dealt with.

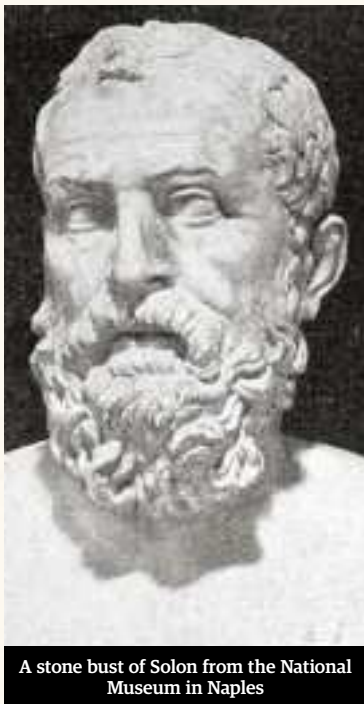


## Democracy in Athens

594 BCE

It is the Athenian statesman Solon who champions the beginnings of democracy in Athens, and by extension the Western world. Such is his influence that he achieves an almost-mythical status in later years, and is regarded as a founding father of Athens.

During his lifetime, Athens undergoes an economic crisis where much of the arable farmland is held by a small group of aristocrats. Solon sets about restructuring the social system that assigns people to wealth brackets based on income. He also oversees the creation of new law codes, making the system fairer for the majority. Solon successfully lays the foundations of a political system that has since been adopted all over the world.



A stone bust of Solon from the National Museum in Naples

## Battle of Plataea

479 BCE

While the Greeks had fought bravely the year before, they had been soundly defeated, and Xerxes looks poised to sweep over resistance in the summer of 479 BCE. On the northern plateau of Plataea, the two armies draw up, neither wanting to cross a river in the middle of the battlefield and break up their formations. The Persians mistake a Greek retreat for a route and charge across the river. They are soundly defeated by the savage Sparta hoplites. Many of the Persian soldiers are slaughtered when Athenians attack their camp, and without an army, Persia's ambitions of Greece are lost.

The plain of Plataea, in the shadow of Mount Cithaeron, where the Persian army was put to rout



## Athens goes potty for pottery

Red-figure pottery becomes the new artistic trend in Athens. It is recognisable by its red figures painted on a black background, and replaces the older black-figure pottery that originated in Corinth. 525 BCE



## Battle of Marathon

The culmination of King Darius's first invasion of Greece, this battle sees a smaller Greek army smashing the might of the Persian invasion force. The defeat is so great that the Persians are forced out of Greece for ten years. 490 BCE

## Battle of Thermopylae

One of the most famous battles in history, Thermopylae sees 300 Spartans and 7,000 other Greeks hold a pass against overwhelming odds. The battle takes place at the same time as the naval engagement at Artemisium. 480 BCE



Xerxes, king of the Persian Empire, crosses the Hellespont with his army, ready to invade Greece

## Vying for power

The Greek colonies in Sicily come into conflict with the Carthaginian Empire. Carthage would become famous as the city-state that took on the might of Rome but, like Greece, was unsuccessful. 580 BCE

## The Persian Wars

To punish Athens and Eretria's role in the Ionian revolt, Persian king Darius launches an invasion of Greece. This invasion also serves to remove any more destabilising Greek influences that might threaten the Persians. 497-479 BCE

## Ionian revolt 499 BCE

The precursor to the Greco-Persian wars, the Ionian revolts see the Greek colonies of Asia Minor rise up against their Persian overlords. Unpopular local tyrants and bundled military operations set the scene, with mainland Greece sending supplies and men to aid their countrymen. The Ionians are the first to go on the offensive by burning Sardis, an important city in the Persian Empire. Then the Persian military machine proves to be too strong; after five years of defensive fighting, the Ionians are beaten into submission and come under the rule of the Persian kings.

## The Persians strike back 480 BCE

After Marathon, the Persians regroup under Xerxes, who launches another invasion. The Greeks muster a fleet of more than 200 ships in the straits of Artemisium to fend them off. The 1,200-strong Persian fleet loses one-third to stormy weather and the Greek coastline, but uses its numbers to force the Greeks back. The Greeks gain valuable insight into Persian tactics - the Persians are no longer invincible.

A coin minted in Darius I's image





## 479 BCE - 1896

### Victory or defeat

479 BCE

After the Greek victories against the Persians, it is clear that mainland Greece is safe from future invasion. Off the back of this, Athens forms the Delian League, an alliance of hundreds of city-states that will collaborate and continue to fight the Persian Empire. While a noble cause, from a Greek perspective, the Athenians soon begin to use the navy that the league had formed for its own uses. The league essentially becomes the Athenian Empire, as Athens now has the naval might to bully any wayward city-states into line. This soon brings it into conflict with its rival, Sparta.

Stone fragment of an Athenian decree detailing the collection of tribute from league members



The trireme would have been the main warship of the Greek and Persian navy

### The King's Peace 387 BCE

As the Peloponnesian War saw resentment against Athens as one of its main causes, so the Corinthian War was fuelled by anger against Sparta. Sparta gain an early upper hand on land in the conflict, but is decisively beaten at sea by a Persian fleet. Subsequent territorial gains by Athens see the Persians ally with Sparta, which brings the remaining Greek allies to the negotiating table.

In the Peace of Antalcidas, or the King's Peace, Persia takes control of all cities in Asia Minor and places like Cyprus in the Aegean. This ensures that the Persian sphere of influence can once again interfere in Greek affairs, and the peace accord - almost ironically - does not bring peace to mainland Greece, where intermittent conflicts rage for years after.

### Helot Revolt

A devastating earthquake near Sparta is utilised by the Helots, the Spartan slave class, to rebel against their cruel masters. The superior Spartan warriors make short work of the rebels.

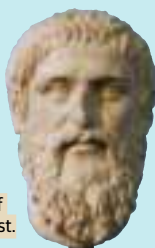
465 BCE



### Birth of Plato

Along with his teacher, Socrates, and his pupil, Aristotle, Plato lays out the foundation of Western philosophy and science. The polymath also goes on to found the Platonic Academy in Athens, the first centre of higher learning in the West.

c.427 BCE



### Death of Thucydides

The author of the only full account of the Peloponnesian War, Thucydides stands side by side with Herodotus for his influence on historical narrative. Like Herodotus, he is almost given a nickname, dubbed the 'father of scientific history'.

c.401 BCE

### Finding the atom

The philosopher Democritus, known as the 'father of modern science', lays out his ideas of atomic theory. Although hugely influential, none of his writings and work survive with us to the modern day.

400 BCE



479 BCE

465 BCE

431 BCE

430-429 BCE

427 BCE

401 BCE

400 BCE

387 BCE

338 BCE

### Death stalks the streets

An epidemic ravages the city of Athens and leaves it devastated. Accounts of lawlessness, excess and a general breakdown of morals are recorded, as the population does not believe it will survive long.

430-429 BCE



### Plague returns to Athens

Just three years after the first wave of epidemics, a second wave hits Athens again. There is a range of theories as to what could have caused the outbreak, ranging from typhus to typhoid, but the truth may never be known.

427 BCE

### Rise of Macedonia

Philip of Macedon defeats the allied cities of Greece in the Battle of Chaeronea. The immediate aftermath is Macedon gaining hegemony over almost all of southern Greece.

338 BCE

### Start of Peloponnesian War 431 BCE

The growing power of Athens is of great concern to Sparta. The final straw is Athens' plan to rebuild its extensive harbour fortifications that Sparta fear will push undecided city-states over to the Athenian side. The spark that ignites the conflict is over the city of Poteidaia, which falls under Sparta and its Peloponnesian League's sphere of influence. Promising protection from Athenian aggression, the situation escalates to open war. After a long conflict, the Spartans smash the Athenian navy at Aegospotami - but only with financial help from their old enemy, Persia.



One of the most complete depictions of Alexander the Great from the Alexander Mosaic. He is described in historical sources as having blond hair rather than black

### Conqueror of the known world 336-323 BCE

Having inherited a well-trained and professional army from his father, a young Alexander turns his insatiable hunger for conquest to the entire known world. His charisma and energy gain him many loyal followers, and in a string of victories he conquers Greece, Egypt and the Persian Empire. His army, having marched thousands of kilometres from home, revolts when it reaches India, and he is forced to turn back. After a heavy drinking session that leaves Alexander weak and fever ridden, one of the greatest generals in history passes away aged only 32.



# The Beginnings of Ancient Greece

Beards were a badge or sign of virility in Ancient Greece; men would even have their beards frequently curled with tongs

## Rome versus Macedonia

214 BCE

The first of the Macedonian Wars, fought between Macedon and Rome and its Greek allies, sees its status as a major power be stripped away. Macedon had sided with the Carthaginians during the Second Punic War, so it is a perceived danger to Rome. The threat of it sending reinforcements to General Hannibal Barca sees Rome dispatch troops to bring it to heel. Over a prolonged conflict, the phalanx proves no match for the Roman legion, and by the 2nd century BCE, Macedonia has been divided into the new Roman provinces of Achaia and Epirus.



The kingdom of Macedonia, still powerful before the conflict, would be stripped of its power by the Romans



Cleopatra was said to have died from an asp bite, but judging how painful that would have been, other poison seems more likely

## Death of a dynasty 30 BCE

When Alexander the Great dies, one of his generals, Ptolemy, installs himself as ruler of Egypt. From him springs the Ptolemaic dynasty that rules the Nile for close to 300 years. While mainland Greece is firmly under the thumb of Rome, Egypt - with its Greek ruling class - still has a measure of independence. This comes to an end with its last queen, Cleopatra, and her doomed love affairs with both Julius Caesar and Mark Antony - two of the most powerful men in the late Roman Republic. After instigating civil war against soon-to-be Emperor Augustus, Antony and Cleopatra commit suicide, ending the Greek line of pharaohs.

## War of the Diadochi

Without Alexander's leadership to hold his empire together, the Diadochi - Alexander's generals - fight each other to inherit the kingdom. The first war splits the empire and signals years of conflict and bloodshed between former allies.

322-320 BCE



## Galic invasion

During the aftermath of the Wars of the Diadochi, the fragile peace is shattered as Gallic tribesmen invade through northern Greece. The Gauls loot the area surrounding Macedon and gain substantial booty.

280 BCE

## Defeat at Corinth

An allied Greek army is crushed under the heel of the Roman legions. With Corinth destroyed, the Roman Republic now has complete control over all of the Greek city-states.

146 BCE



336-323 BCE 322-320 BCE 281 BCE 280 BCE 214 BCE 146 BCE 86 BCE 30 BCE 381 CE 1896

## Foundation of the Achaean League

Also known as the Achaean Confederacy, this group of city-states from the northern and central territories of Greece consider themselves to have a common identity. This powerful group comes into conflict with Sparta, Macedon and later Rome itself.

c.281 BCE



## The Oracle is silenced

Having survived numerous sackings, the oracle at Delphi is closed when the Roman emperor Theodosius I bans all pagan rituals and instigates Christianity as the state religion of the empire.

381 CE

## The sacking of Athens 86 BCE

During the First Mithridatic War, fought to stem the Romans' growing influence in the Greek world, a Roman army under the command of General Sulla lays siege to Athens. Stripping the surrounding countryside of wood and valuables, he starves the city. The sack of the city is said to have been so great that blood was flowing in the streets. The aftermath leaves no room for ambiguity; it is Rome, not Athens, that is the cultural and political heart of the Mediterranean.



Sulla showed no mercy to Athens during the siege, or during the subsequent sack of the city



Spyridon Louis was the first winner of the marathon event. Being Greek, this made him a national hero overnight

## Modern Olympic Games 1896

A revival of the ancient games, but the emphasis changes from the need to win at all costs to one of sportsmanship. A new event is added that is conspicuously absent from the ancient games: the marathon. Athens also becomes the new seat of the games. Olympia, no longer needed for its religious significance, has been sidelined.





# THE GREEK CITY-STATES

Several contributing factors led to the rise of the polis in Ancient Greece, shaping the history of the Western world

**T**he foundation of the glory that became Classical Greece was the city-state, or polis. Although the city-state is most commonly associated with Greek civilisation, it is not unique to that society; Babylonia, Phoenicia, and other cultures developed the concept as well. In Ancient Greece, it was a phenomenon with origins in upheaval, migration, geography, and other factors.

As the Bronze Age waned, Mycenaean Greece began its long descent to ultimate collapse. Named for the city of Mycenae, the Greece of the Trojan War endured for 500 years from 1600 to 1100 BCE. Athens and Sparta flourished at the height of Mycenaean power. However, the demise of Mycenaean civilisation is shrouded in mystery. Evidence suggests that there may have been internal strife. Some clues indicate that cities were put to the torch, destroyed and conquered by some outside power, possibly a Dorian invasion from the north. Written historical records of the period are scarce, perhaps perishing in the flames of the Mycenaean decline.

The fall of Mycenaean Greece precipitated a Dark Age. Archaeologists have found little evidence of civilisation during the period that

persisted for roughly 300 years. No written record of the Dark Age has been discovered. Sometime during the 8th century BCE, however, it is believed that a substantial southward migration began. Greek peoples settled into agricultural communities. Cities were reoccupied and rebuilt. The Peloponnese and Attic peninsulas experienced population growth and established

trade and commerce. Although the written form of the Mycenaean language had been lost, the Greeks adapted the Phoenician alphabet to their own speech and, finally, a written record began to appear.

While the Greeks shared a common ancestry, physical barriers like the geography of the eastern Mediterranean basin, kept communities relatively isolated.

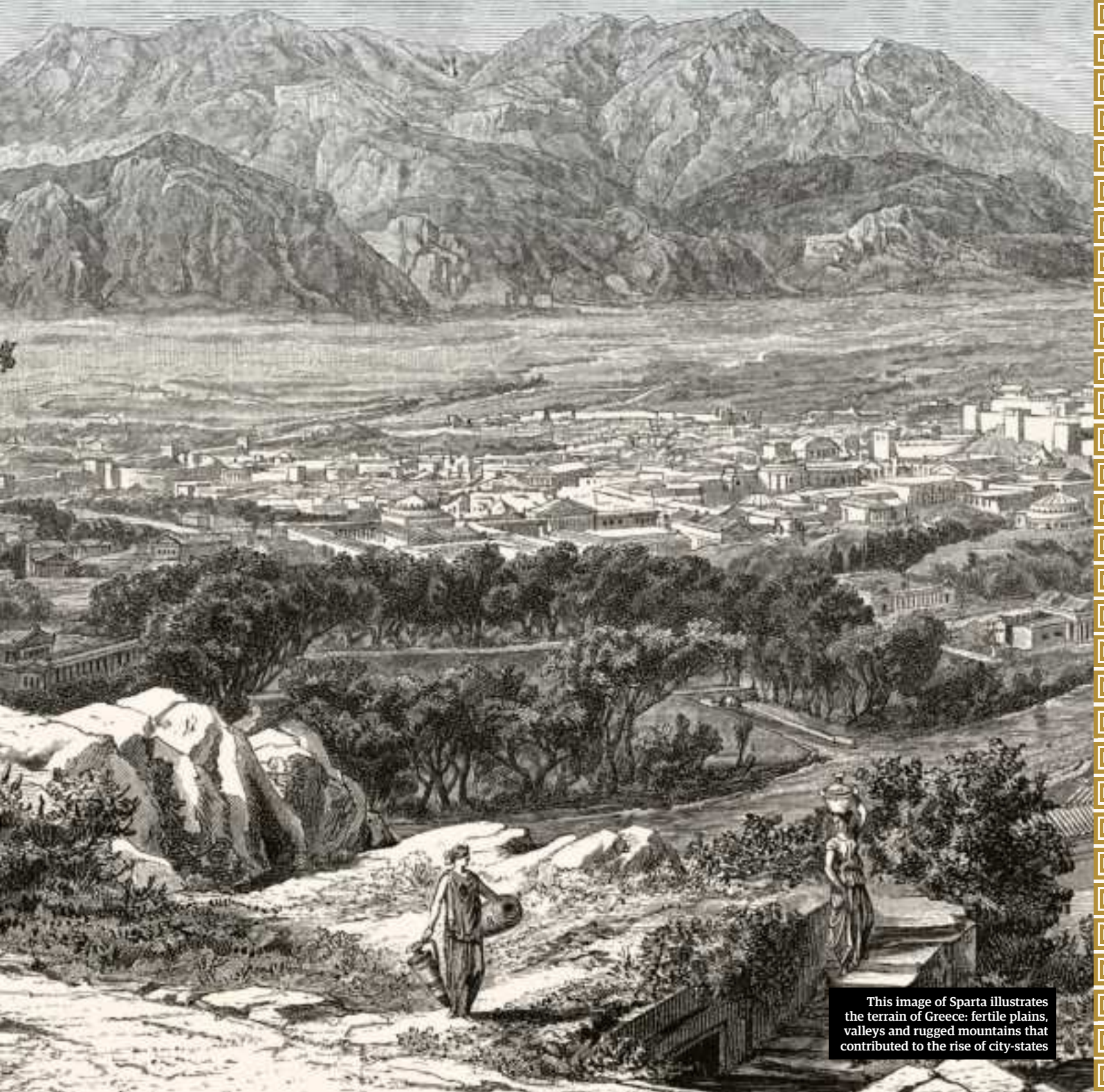
From around 800 to 480 BCE, the Archaic Period of Greek

history, the city-state itself emerged and flourished, and though cultural and political differences may have developed among the early settlements, historians will generally agree that the geography of the region was the principle contributing factor in the flowering of these economic and social centres. The landscape of Greece consists of a rugged, mountainous interior punctuated by deep valleys and some areas

The Temple of Artemis, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, was built in the city-state of Ephesus







This image of Sparta illustrates the terrain of Greece: fertile plains, valleys and rugged mountains that contributed to the rise of city-states





with coastal plains that offer ready access to the Aegean, Ionian and Mediterranean seas. An untold number of little islands cluster about the Attic and Peloponnese peninsulas.

Early city-states were agricultural settlements that took advantage of the fertile soil, and farmers cultivated the valleys and hillsides, initially on a subsistence basis but then thriving to the extent that they sought to trade their surplus crops for finished trade goods and other commodities. Those settlements in close proximity to the sea naturally developed maritime economies; fishing and merchant shipping stimulated trade, and eventually colonisation began.

The mountains, valleys, plains and seacoasts of Greece were formidable barriers to the concentration of large populations. Travel between the settlements was difficult at best. Therefore, separate communities began to evolve. While they may have shared common ancestry and language, these communities were largely isolated from one another, and the catalyst of economic growth and prosperity hastened their independent maturity. They fielded armies and sometimes built fortifications and walls for protection.

## CITY BUILDING

These communities became known as poleis and developed their own senses of legal, social, economic, political and cultural dynamics. As populations grew, the settlements expanded to include a fortified citadel, typically located on high ground and known as an acropolis, which would include one or more temples built in homage to a patron god and other deities. If the acropolis was not located in the centre of the city, it was usually nearby, constructed on a prominent hill or geographic feature.

During the late 8th century BCE, the agora, a public gathering space and marketplace, became a focus of daily life, including commerce and civil discourse. Gradually, as the city became the seat of government, urban populations grew and the influence of the polis expanded with the administration of surrounding territory, known as the chora, outside the city proper. The city-states developed distinct governments, wrote their own laws, and by the late 6th century BCE had issued their own coinage and begun collecting taxes.

At the height of the proliferation of city-states, more than 1,000 poleis had been founded in Greece and across the Mediterranean and the coast of Asia Minor. By the middle of the 7th century BCE, population growth and economic prosperity had spurred a great wave of colonisation throughout the region, and this tremendous expansion of Greek culture lasted for more than 250 years. Principal among the city-states were Athens, Sparta, Rhodes, Syracuse, Corinth, Thebes, Argos, Elis, and Eritrea.

Sparta, which is said to have encompassed 8,500 kilometres (5,281 miles), was by far the largest in terms of land. In contrast, Athens was the largest city-state in terms of population with roughly 200,000 inhabitants by the late 5th century BCE. The populations of other prominent city-states such as Argos and Corinth are believed to have peaked at 15,000 and 10,000 respectively. Sparta's population was estimated to be even fewer.

While the exportation of the Greek peoples and their culture contributed to the establishment of colonies, these settlements matured in their own right,

As the mythical birthplace of Greek deities Apollo and Artemis, Delos held a sacred position among the city-states



The ruins of the Temple of Apollo at Corinth bear mute testimony to the city-state's former grandeur

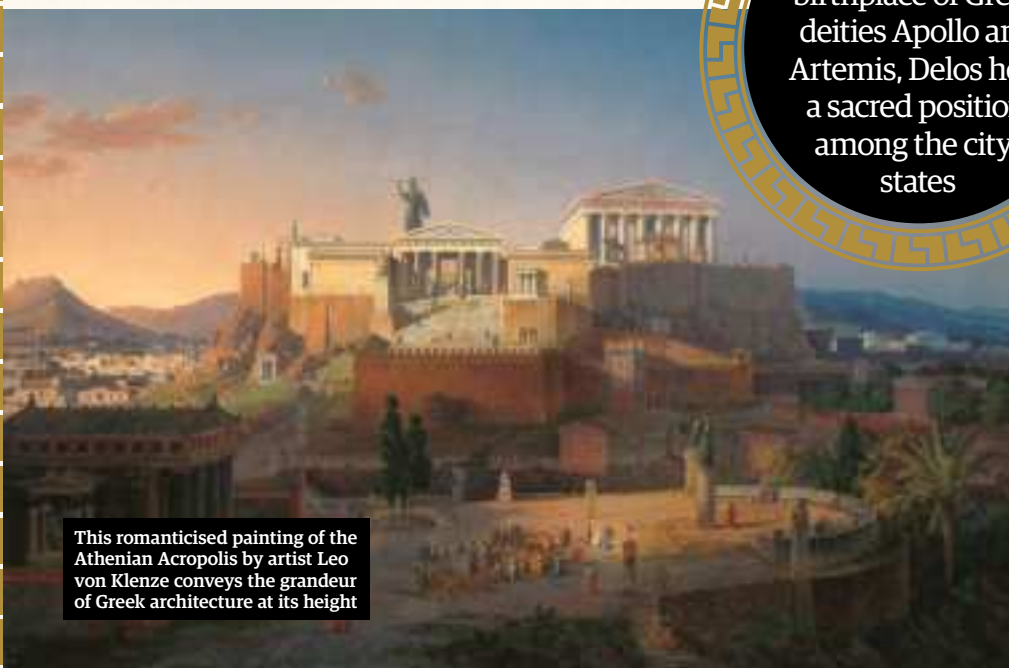
maintaining trade and religious similarities with their parent cities but forming their own political identities and exercising autonomy.

## POWER AND POLITICS

The early Greek city-states were governed by monarchs, representative of a small class of aristocratic landowners who had amassed significant wealth. Most of the city-states were small, some of them barely worthy of recognition as anything more than a village. Therefore, the use of the term 'king' or 'queen' to describe these early rulers is somewhat inaccurate. The aristocracy generally opposed the rule of any monarch in a permanent sense while also staunchly defending the political independence of their particular cities.

However, the continuing definition of social classes threatened the power of the aristocracy by the mid 6th century. The emergence of the merchant class broadened social contrasts and distinctions, particularly in the larger city-states, and gave rise to even greater discourse and class struggle. In numerous cases, as the aristocracy became increasingly unpopular, its rulers were supplanted by strongmen known as 'tyrants', who rose to power - often from the fringe of society - with the support of the people.

The term 'tyrant' itself did not originally convey the negative connotation that is associated with it today. Originally, tyrants were indeed authoritarian, but no reference was made to cruelty or self-serving administration. While many of them ruled



This romanticised painting of the Athenian Acropolis by artist Leo von Klenze conveys the grandeur of Greek architecture at its height



Syracuse was the home of the great early mathematician, physicist, inventor and astronomer Archimedes, born in 287 BCE



Artemisia I of Caria, a queen of the Greek city-state of Halicarnassus, raises a bow and arrow

only a short time and were deposed, banished, assassinated, or even stoned to death, there were notable exceptions.

Cypselus ruled Corinth for 30 years and encouraged the city's colonisation of northwestern Greece. Modern historians view him as a demagogue, but he is believed to have been so popular that he did not require a bodyguard and moved freely among the people. He was succeeded by his son, Periander, who ruled Corinth for 40 years. Assessments of Periander's rule vary. Although some contemporary accounts portrayed him as a cruel dictator, others assert that he was just and equitable. Historians do remember him as one of the Seven Sages of Greece, prominent individuals who lived in the 6th century BCE and were known far and wide for their wisdom. Regardless, after Periander's death in 580 BCE, the Corinthian tyranny also faded away.

During the course of 200 years, the meaning of the word 'tyrant' did evolve to its present

understanding. It should be noted, though, that the tyrants served as a bridge from authoritarian aristocratic rule to the more democratic forms of government that eventually emerged among the city-states.

## SPARTAN STAND

Sparta was a notable exception to the rule of the tyrants. Ancient Greek historians relate that the oracle of the sun god Apollo at Delphi guided the statesman and military commander Lycurgus to shape Spartan society on the pillars of three virtues: equality among its citizens, military prowess and austerity. Lycurgus is remembered as Sparta's legendary lawgiver, and the constitution, sometimes referred to as the Great Rhetra, adopted by the city-state around 650 BCE preserved the power of the aristocracy, protected the rule of the two royal houses of Sparta, and initiated the societal structure that built the militaristic culture for which the city-state has earned enduring fame.

Spartan society emphasised loyalty to the city-state and service in the military, and Lycurgus is seen as the chief sponsor of its development. Social classes included the Spartans, also known as spartiates, who were full citizens, helots, who were serfs or slave labourers, and perioeci, craftsmen and merchants who were neither full citizens nor slaves. The word perioeci literally translates as 'dwellers around'.

Military service was compulsory in Sparta, and all male citizens were required to participate, essentially throughout their lives. At the age of seven, young boys were removed from their homes and entered the Agoge, a state-run system of education, physical training and military indoctrination. Men under 30 years of age, even those who were married, were required to live in communal military barracks away from their wives and to eat meals at communal tables.

Spartan women, perhaps due in part to the commitment of males to the military, were well

## The Olympic Games

The first Olympic Games took place in the cluster of gathering spaces, temples, and buildings at the sanctuary of Olympia in 776 BCE. Organised by leaders of the city-state of Elis, the games originated as a religious and athletic celebration that was to occur every four years, and during the peace or truce that was observed during the Olympics all disputes and armed conflict between rivals or warring city-states were suspended. The games included athletic competitions and combat demonstrations, such as wrestling, chariot racing, distance running, and throwing the discus and javelin.

Although the actual origins of the Olympic Games remain somewhat mysterious, it is believed that the events promoted some measure of goodwill and co-operation among the city-states. Sacrifices to the gods were common, particularly to Zeus, whose great temple at Olympia was said to have housed a huge statue of the god, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, wrought from ivory and gold by the sculptor Phidias around 435 BCE. The Temple of Zeus, the Temple of Hera, a tomb-like structure called the Pelopion, and the altar on which sacrifices were performed, stood within the temenos, or sacred enclosure, at Olympia.



Extensive archaeological surveys have been conducted among the ruins of ancient Olympia, yielding fascinating artefacts related to the Olympic Games





## The olive tree

The olive tree was such a driving force in the economies of the Ancient Greek city-states that it was believed to have been a gift of the gods, namely from Athena, the goddess of wisdom, from whom Athens took its name. The olive tree contributed to the prosperity of Greeks in many ways. Its wood was used in the construction of homes and ships. Its fruit was a staple of the Greek diet. Its oil served as fuel for lamps and was thought to have medicinal value. Its leaves were used to form the crowns worn by victorious athletes. Perhaps most significantly, its abundance allowed the export of its products to generate tremendous wealth for the city-states.

The origin of the olive tree was said to have been in a contest proposed by Zeus between Athena and Poseidon, god of the sea, to bestow a gift upon the people. Poseidon produced a salt spring by striking his trident on nearby rocks. Athena brought forth the olive tree, its branches swaying in the breeze and full of ripening fruit. The early Athenians were allowed to choose one of these gifts, and they selected the olive tree. Today, an olive tree grows on the Athenian Acropolis in remembrance of the myth.



This 19th-century artist's interpretation depicts the sacred olive tree on the Acropolis in the city of Athens



Areopagus Hill was the site of meetings held by a group of Athenian noblemen, which eventually assumed its name

educated and generally enjoyed greater freedom than women of other Greek city-states. They engaged in sporting competitions, received formal schooling, and were allowed to own property.

### ATHENS ASCENDANT

The Athenian king, or 'basileus', ruled as early as the 9th century BCE with a group of influential nobles at court. By 683 BCE, though, the monarchy had been abolished, primarily through the action of the very nobles with which the king had been surrounded. The Athenian nobility amassed sizeable wealth and increasing political influence as their agricultural products were exported around the region.

As their wealth grew, Athenian noblemen began to gather to discuss political issues of the day. This gathering was called the 'Areopagus', named for the prominent hill on which the men gathered. Rather than vesting most of the power in the hands of a single monarch, the Areopagus favoured government by a group of nine noblemen that were elected by their body. By the 8th century, an oligarchy had emerged from the deliberations of the Areopagus. Known as 'archons', these chosen few were empowered to make decisions affecting the lives of every Athenian; however, their power was held in check by the requirement that any decision be submitted to the entire Areopagus and approved first.

The oligarchy and Areopagus are evidence of the early stirrings of Athenian democracy. Still, there were significant class distinctions in the city-state, and the distribution of wealth was quite limited. Economic issues surfaced as subsistence farmers depleted the soil and were unable to produce crops that would sustain their families. In order to survive, they sold themselves and their families into servitude, essentially slavery. While the average farming family in Athens suffered, the aristocratic class continued to prosper.

When economic disparity boiled over into civil unrest in the mid 7th century BCE, the oligarchy fell out of favour with the people. In its place rose a succession of so-called tyrants, who took control of the Athenian government with the support of the common people.

Most prominent among these tyrants was Solon, who came to power in 594 BCE. Solon established an aristocratic form of government that was loosely based on a constitution. He enacted sweeping reforms and is remembered to this day as the foremost proponent of redress for the lower classes of Athenians and as a lawgiver.

One of the earliest of the Greek city-states, Argos was founded during the Mycenaean period

Solon organised Athenian society into four distinct classes, or tribes, based upon their wealth, and established a representative body called the Council of 400, with 100 members of each tribe. The poorest social class was further represented by an assembly known as the Ecclesia of Demos.

The military strongman Peisistratus gained control in Athens in 560 BCE and ruled for the next 50 years. Although he maintained his tight grip on power through the presence of a loyal army, Peisistratus enacted measures to benefit Athens' subsistence farmers and to improve the infrastructure of the growing city-state, while substantially diminishing the power of the aristocratic class. Under Cleisthenes, whose brief rule lasted only six years from 508 to 502 BCE, all free men living in Athens and the surrounding Attic Peninsula were granted citizenship, meaning they were allowed to participate in the Athenian political process. The seeds of democracy had begun to take root in Athenian soil.

### CITY-STATES PROLIFERATE

Athens and Sparta were not the only influential city-states. Corinth was reputed as a centre of decadent living but also as a hub of trade and commerce. Located on an isthmus that offered access to both the Aegean and Ionian seas and controlled access to the Peloponnese, Corinth was a prominent naval power that continually opposed Athenian influence and came to play a key role in the development of Greek culture.

Thebes was also a powerful economic and military force during the era of the city-states and a principal adversary of Athens. The Theban army actually sided with Xerxes during the Persian invasion of Greece in 480 BCE. Rhodes was a maritime city-state that actually encompassed an entire island in the eastern Mediterranean. Its location astride busy trade routes allowed merchants to amass significant wealth.

The expansion of Greek culture and settlement gave rise to numerous city-states along the coast of Asia Minor and westward to Sicily, the Italian mainland, and the coast of North Africa. In the late 8th century BCE, settlers from the area of Corinth founded Syracuse, which became the largest city in Sicily and waged war with the kingdom of Carthage for control of the island. In turn, Syracuse also established colonies along the coast of the Adriatic Sea.

Around 600 BCE, adventurers from Phocaea, a city-state located on the coast of modern Turkey, sailed westward and founded the settlement of Massalia, which developed into a bustling western



## Greek city-states

The most powerful and influential territories in Greece's classical era

### Olympia

The location of the first Olympic Games was a sacred site in Ancient Greece. Olympia also held the Heraia Games for women, and had many temples dedicated to the worship of the gods.

### Delphi

Delphi had some of the most important temples in all of Greece. It is said to have been home to the oracle Pythia, and Greeks would travel to seek her wisdom.

### Corinth

Known for its high-quality pottery, Corinth was a major trading and educational centre in Ancient Greece. The city-state had its own currency and was home to a major type of classical Greek architecture.

### Thebes

The most powerful city-state before the rise of Athens and Sparta. Thebes enjoyed a heightened period of power after siding with Sparta against Athens. In Greek mythology it was the birthplace of Herakles.

### Sparta

### Sparta

The warlike city-state had a powerful army and helped protect Greece against the Persians. Every male citizen was a warrior, taught from age seven, to form a professional and widely feared army.

### Athens

One of the most powerful and wealthy city-states, Athens had a strong navy and the first democracy. It had a long-standing rivalry with Sparta that eventually resulted in war.

Mediterranean seaport and became modern Marseilles, France.

### COMPETITION AND COOPERATION

The early rivalries that emerged among the Greek city-states emanated from the desire to control surrounding lands. The aristocratic ruling classes often disagreed, and at times these conflicts erupted into open warfare. In fact, at any given time in their turbulent history, two or more of the city-states were at war with one another. Inevitably as the territories of the city-states expanded, disputes over land and the definition of borders arose. Further, access to the sea and the exploitation of valuable resources such as timber, silver and other commodities fuelled rivalries.

Although most of the city-states banded together to defeat the Persian invasion of 480 BCE, the response to such an external threat merely postponed the coming of the catastrophic Peloponnesian War decades later. In the wake of the defeat of the Persians, Athens, with its unsurpassed naval supremacy, dominated the other city-states.

The Athenians assembled the Delian League and in time transformed the alliance into something that resembled a protectorate or empire rather than a cooperative gathering of equal city-states. Corinth remained a staunch rival of Athens, and by 431 BCE the leaders of Sparta had come to recognise the threat posed by Athenian domination. The ruinous Peloponnesian War

between Athens and the Delian League and the Spartan-led Peloponnesian League left Athens vanquished and Sparta preeminent but too weak to effectively assert control. In time, Thebes defeated Sparta and dominated Greek affairs for a brief period. Internal strife and armed conflict weakened the city-states and hastened their conquest by the Macedonian army of King Philip II, who defeated their alliance at Chaeronea in 338 BCE.

The development of the Greek city-states served as a catalyst for the expansion of Greek culture and influence across much of the known world. While their common heritage contributed to the collective realisation that all were 'Greek', the city-states remained fiercely independent and in significant aspects of their societies, quite diverse.





# EVERYDAY LIFE IN ANCIENT GREECE

From the wealthiest citizens to the poorest slaves, discover what day-to-day life was like in the city-states

**H**istory often concentrates on the feats of great men, and Ancient Greece is no different. Historians have written countless books about Alexander the Great, Homer and Socrates. But what about the average Greek who lived and died without ever leading an army, penning an epic poem or founding a new philosophy? What did they do, where did they live, and what were they taught?

Fragmentary documents, records and archaeological evidence are providing the answers. The musings of philosophers often shed light on everyday activities, while epic poems describe the lives of the characters they feature. Archaeologists have unearthed the foundations of houses and analysed them to work out what happened inside. The objects they have found also provide clues: decorated vases show household scenes and discarded rubbish tells us about tools used in the workplace. Social historians

have pieced it all together to plot the lives of the Ancient Greeks from the cradle to the grave.

Classical Athens left more sources of information than any other city-state - its population was more literate than any other in the world and there

is an abundance of archaeological remains, on which so much of what we know about Ancient Greece is based. But we also know plenty about the city-state of Sparta; although its population was famously illiterate, generations of historians have found the warlike city-state to be a fascinating study. In other city-states, sources are lacking. Our knowledge of everyday life in Macedonia before Alexander the Great is shrouded in the mists of millennia.

Join us on a journey to the past to find out more about Lycos the slave-ceramicist, Cephalus the shield maker and Pasion the money lender. This is less a story about great kings and great minds, and more about work, rest and play for the average Greek.

Although  
3% of Athens' population died in warfare every year, citizens still regarded military service as a privilege



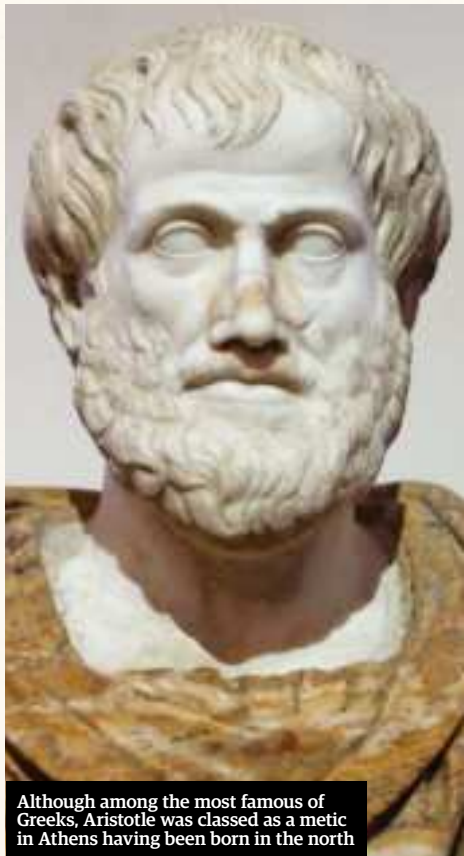








A gravestone showing a slave attending to her deceased mistress



Although among the most famous of Greeks, Aristotle was classed as a metic in Athens having been born in the north

## How was society structured?

The hoplites stood in a line, shoulder to shoulder, ready to receive the enemy's charge. In their right hand they carried a spear to kill the enemy, in their left a shield that locked together in a long shield wall. Individually, the spearmen were vulnerable. Together, they presented a united, strong front - the much-feared phalanx.

The social structure that defined the city-states can be traced back to the battlefield. In order to function effectively, the phalanx required a large number of soldiers who were committed to maintaining the formation. If each soldier felt a part of the city-state for which they fought, they would be more likely to stand strong on the battlefield. Thus the idea of Greek citizenship was born - if every man was bound to fight in the phalanx on the battlefield, they should also be bound to political participation in the city-state. The most demanding duty for a citizen was service in the phalanx when called upon - and considering that most city-states went to war in three out of every four years, they would be called upon often.

But citizens also had civic responsibilities. They had to serve on 501-men juries (so large to prevent any bribery of the jurors) and most would be called to serve on the Council of 500. They would receive a moderate payment for their duties, but not much more than a token gesture. Wealthy citizens were expected to pay tax at times of emergency, such as during the Peloponnesian War, and were also subject to liturgies to pay for specified things - perhaps a trireme, a festival or a new gymnasium. These sponsorships were not seen as a burden and different citizens competed to provide the best facilities for the state.

Citizenship was the ideal in Ancient Greece, although it was limited to adult males who had completed their military training. Others lived in the city-states too, although their status varied depending upon their position.

Foreign-born residents of Athens were known as metics. Although they were liable for military service, they did not have citizenship and were unable to vote, hold office or own land. They did, however, have the right to judicial representation. Despite the disadvantages of being a metic, Athens received a flood of immigrants following the Persian Wars of the early 5th century BCE as Ionians fled to a place of safety. They were forced to pay a poll tax of one drachma per month or else face enslavement. Numbers continued to



A citizen could be ostracised from Athens for ten years if others voted for it

grow throughout the next few decades, reaching 20,000 by 431 BCE, perhaps 10% of the total Athenian population. It was a considerable minority who played an important role in city life.

At the bottom of the social hierarchy were the slaves, making up one-quarter of the population of Athens. An inescapable facet of Greek society, their work enabled citizens to have the time to take part in the democratic system. Slave-owning was usually small scale as little profit was to be made in the buying and selling of them. An unskilled slave typically cost around 200 drachmae, or 200 times the amount of a worker's daily wage. Skilled slaves might cost three times the amount, while one particular slave-prostitute exchanged hands for 3,000 drachmae.

Many female slaves were used for domestic service, preparing food and helping around the house. However, this often left them at risk of





A cache of 190 ostraka dumped in a well, all inscribed with similar handwriting, may be evidence of Athenian electoral fraud

## "The spring festival in honour of Dionysus was particularly raucous"

abuse at the hands of their masters. Male slaves were often set up in their own workshops where they would work at a trade, occasionally earning enough money on the side to buy their freedom – a free slave was given the same rights as a metic.

The status of women was often little better than that of the slave, especially in Athens. Women were excluded from political participation, could not own property in their own right and were usually dependent on their husband, father or male relatives. Most of their lives were spent stuck inside, weaving and playing music. Since shopping was usually done by slaves, the best opportunity women had to leave the house was

to collect water – though rich women had slaves for this too.

Only in terms of religion were Athenian women provided with opportunities for independence. The patron goddess of the city, Athena, was served by female priestesses, while other gods also had priestesses at the centre of their worship. Only women celebrated the festival of Thesmophoria, honouring Demeter and the successful harvest. The spring festival in honour of Dionysus, the god of wine, was particularly raucous. Women would leave the city and drink copious quantities of wine, and men were advised to give the celebrating women a wide berth.

## The peril of ostracism

Fed up with another citizen? Send them into exile!

Although being a citizen carried certain benefits, it also had its downsides, chief among which was the threat of ostracism. Once a year, Athenian citizens were asked if they wanted to ostracise one of their number. If the answer was yes, a vote was held during which each citizen placed the name of another on a piece of pottery named an ostraka, from which the process of ostracism got its name. The nominations were tallied and the person with the most votes – as long as a minimum number, or quorum, was reached – was exiled from Athens. The ostracised citizen had ten days to leave the city and would be executed if they returned, although their property and possessions were protected and they were free to return after ten years had passed.

Ostracism was designed to neutralise a threat to the city-state and prevent individual citizens from becoming so powerful that they became a tyrant. However, the system was open to abuse. Some ostracised citizens were victims of personal grudges. On one occasion, statesman and general Aristides the Just offered to help an illiterate citizen inscribe his ostraka. Not recognising his helper, the citizen asked Aristides to write his own name: "It's simply that I'm tired of hearing how good he is." Aristides went on to amass the most votes and was ostracised, but was recalled to help fight the Persian invasion of 479 BCE.





# What was domestic life like?

Early Greek houses tended to be simple two-room dwellings with an open porch and a low-pitched pediment, a style that manifested itself in later classical temple architecture. However, domestic home design soon moved on to courtyard residences that housed extended families. Husband and wife, children, grandparents, unmarried siblings and household slaves all lived under one roof - although slave quarters would have been kept very separate from the family and may sometimes have been in a different building.

Girls tended to spend their lives isolated in the home. They would be betrothed early, often around the age of five, and would marry when they came of age around 16 - her groom would be around 30. The wedding festivities lasted three days. Sacrifices would be made to Artemis, the goddess of virginity, and Hera, wife of Zeus and the goddess of marriage. The bride would dispose of her childhood toys before being ritually bathed and dressed. The groom would arrive at the bride's house having been similarly prepared and, after a banquet, would return to his own home with his new bride and the dowry her father provided.

However, the wife would have little more freedom in her new home than she'd had as a child. Women would spend much of their lives in the confines of the home with only domestic chores to do. This included weaving, which remained a household task rather than becoming a trade. The women of the household were largely restricted to the gynaikon, rooms on the upper floor, including at night - husbands and wives usually slept separately.

Men also had their own rooms in the house, called the andron. Here, men would relax during the day - assuming that they were not working or attending civic duties - and entertain at night. There was little organised recreation in the city-states, so Greeks would invite guests to a party called a symposium (meaning 'drinking together'). This was a ritualised institution that began with the serving of dinner. After the food was cleared away, garlands of flowers would be worn and drinks - wine only, as the Greeks did not drink beer - would be distributed. Libations would be taken to honour various gods and strict rules were in place to ensure that things did not get out of hand, although there is plenty of evidence that many symposia ended in quarrels or drunken orgies. Although women were banned, female flute players and dancers were often employed as entertainment, while slave girls would be used to serve the wine.

Separate male and female living quarters were a luxury that the poorest citizens could not afford.

They had one-room abodes that were partitioned using temporary, moveable walls. They did not have the space to host a symposium so would leave the house to drink at a bar. These ranged from a simple street stall to multi-room buildings that served food and wine and offered torches so patrons could make their way home along the city's unlit streets.

Although most men and women kept to separate quarters, there was a high birth rate. Once a wife provided her husband with a male heir, her status would rise. However, unwanted pregnancies and children were common. To deal with the problem, Greeks used a drastic measure: infanticide. Although the physical killing of a child was classed as murder and punishable by the state, it was perfectly acceptable for a father to reject an unwanted child; either because it was deemed sickly or unfit, or merely because it was a girl. In these cases, the baby was left outside the city for nature to take its course. Most died, although some were saved and brought up by childless women. In Sparta, exposure was even state-sponsored. Spartan babies were brought before a panel of elders and it was they who decided whether a child would be allowed to live, not the father.

The lucky Greek child who was rescued or deemed fit to live spent their first years in the female rooms of the house. Rich families would employ a wet nurse, while poorer mothers would take on childcare themselves. Nearly all children would be read the stories from Aesop's *Fables*. At the age of six, the next stage in their education would begin.

Where there is birth, there is also death. If a family member died, responsibility for preparing the body fell to those remaining in the house and the body would remain in the home for up to three days. Demonstrations of grief were public, with much tearing of clothes and hair, loud crying and refusal to eat - behaviours that were thought to comfort the deceased, who would temporarily reside between this world and the next until the funeral was complete.

## Furniture and storage

A necessary piece of furniture was the kline, a couch which doubled up as a bed at night. There were no cupboards or wardrobes; instead, chests were used for storage.

Among the animals commonly kept as pets by Greek households were geese, cranes, quails, dogs and weasels

## Women's quarters

Men and women were largely segregated from each other. Women were typically confined to rooms on the upper floor known as the gynaikon. Here they would carry out domestic duties including weaving.

## Construction

Walls were made from mud bricks, sometimes baked, sometimes coated with lime, but they were not sturdy structures. Thieves often knocked a hole in the wall to enter a dwelling.





A red-figure cup, which shows a man offering a gift to his young male lover

## Pillow talk

### The truth behind prostitution and pederasty

According to the playwright Aristophanes, humans originally had four arms, four legs and two sets of genitals: either two male, two female or one of each. But Zeus split everyone in two, forcing them to look for their other half, and their sexual orientation was determined by the genitals of the half they searched for. It's a comic anecdote, but it does suggest that Greeks accepted homosexuality.

Many Greek men had relationships with adolescent boys, often beginning with a ritualised kidnapping with the permission of the boy's father. As long as the relationship was between social equals and suitably conducted, few Greeks batted an eyelid. However, when the boy reached

adulthood, the relationship would end. Although pederasty was considered entirely acceptable, sex between adult males was seen as absurd.

Yet heterosexuality was still the norm. Marriages were usually arranged between men and women, and the family units they created were the core building blocks of the city-state. Although marriages were supposed to be monogamous, both married and unmarried men made use of prostitutes. Grand hetaerae charged hundreds of drachmae and often became the lovers of great men, while lower down the social scale, Kerameikos was the red-light district where Athens' streetwalkers plied their trade.

## Courtyard

Houses were built around a courtyard. The men's rooms (andron) were usually on the north side of the courtyard, where they would be warmed by the winter sun.

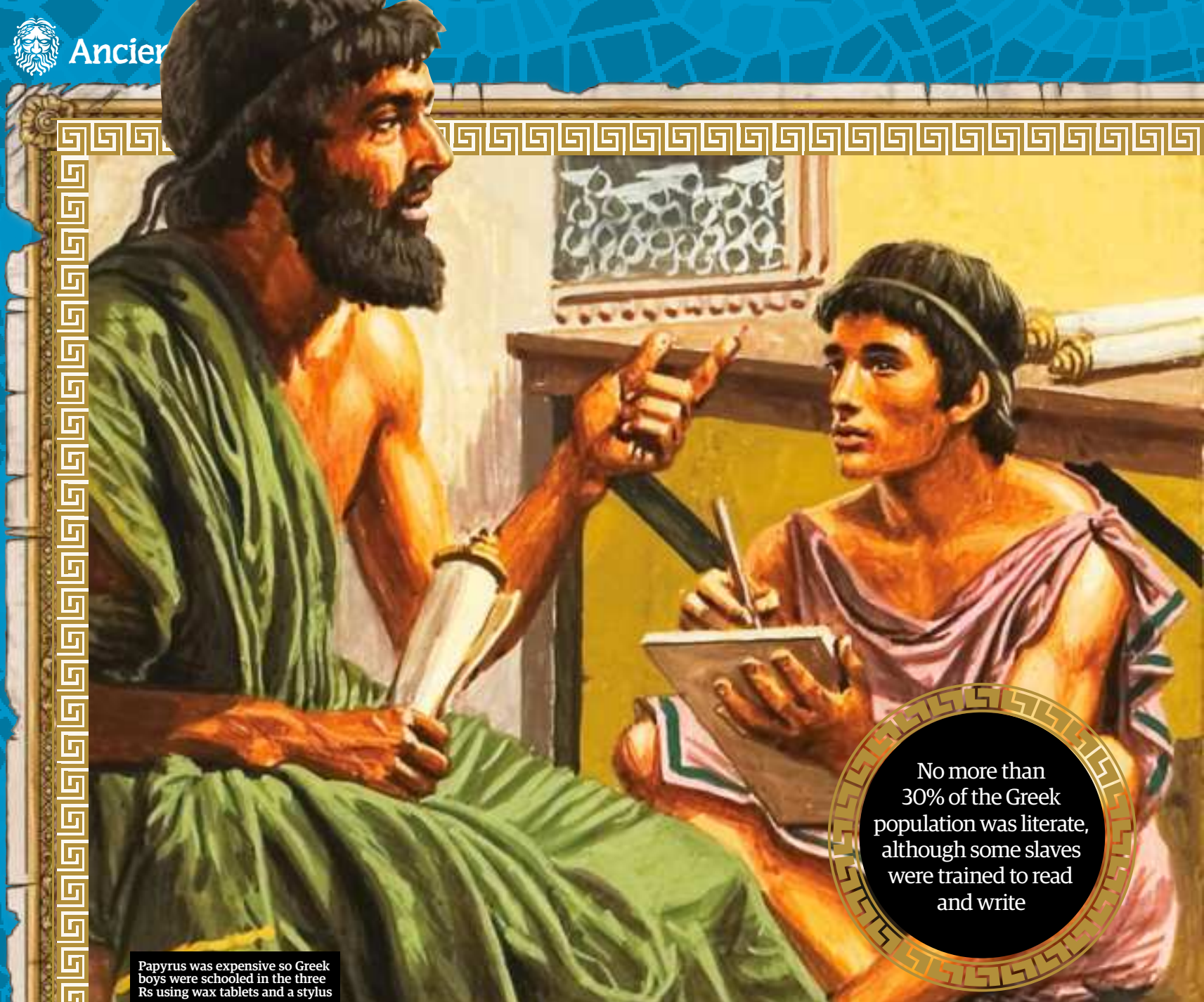
## Bathing and toilets

Only wealthy families had access to a bath tub. No houses had toilets – both men and women would relieve themselves into a chamber pot, while babies were often dangled out of the window.

## Front door

Wooden doors were solid and could be locked and barred. They were also expensive – when Athenians were evacuated in the Peloponnesian War, many took their doors with them.





Papyrus was expensive so Greek boys were schooled in the three Rs using wax tablets and a stylus

No more than 30% of the Greek population was literate, although some slaves were trained to read and write

## How were children taught?

Aristotle, one of the greatest Greek minds, declared: "The roots of education are bitter, but the fruit is sweet." Most Greek city-states regarded education as an important tool to help their people become effective citizens of the future. However, governments actually played little role in teaching the young, leaving the education of children in the hands of their parents and private teachers. Only at the age of 18 did the city-state step in and demand that boys - now classed as *ephebe* - undergo two years of military service.

Early education occurred in an informal setting, usually at home, where a child was taught by

their mother or a slave. Then, from the age of six, most Greek boys attended three different types of classes. They paid for the privilege, although fees were often low enough that all but the poorest families could send their children to them for at least a few years.

Lessons were usually held in the tutor's house, with ten or 20 boys in attendance. Boys from the wealthiest families were often accompanied by a *paidagogos*, a household slave who escorted them to school and took care of them during the day. These slaves held a unique position; it was illegal for any adult other than the slave or teacher to enter the classroom.

The first type of teacher, a *grammatistes*, would instruct boys in the three Rs. There were no desks; students would sit on stools and write using wax tablets and a stylus made from bone or metal. When they were ready to deal with longer works, boys were expected to learn the poems of Homer and be able to recite long passages.

In the second type of class, a *kitharistes* (lyre player) would teach *mousike*, a combination of music, dance, lyrics and poetry. Most boys would learn to play musical instruments, usually the lyre, flute and pipes.

However, the most important school was the gymnasium supervised by *paidotribes* (physical



## This is Sparta

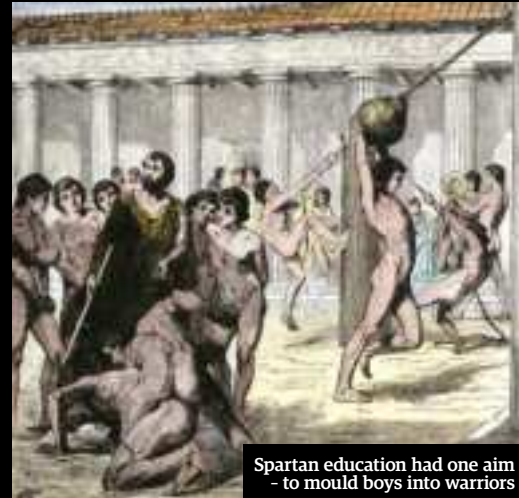
How did Greece's militaristic city-state train a new generation of warriors?

Although most city-states aimed to prepare boys to become effective citizens, Sparta had a more singular objective: to train boys to take their place in the phalanx. In order to do this, education was controlled by the state.

Boys entered the agoge – a military school – when they were about seven years old. For the next 12 years, boys slept in the barracks with their classmates and were instructed by veteran soldiers. It was a brutal environment. Boys were purposely given little food and clothing to encourage them to forage, steal and endure hunger. Punishments gradually became harsher and physical training became harder in order to build up strength and stamina. Although reading and writing was

taught, it was not considered important beyond being able to understand military messages. Music and dancing also formed part of the curriculum, but even that had a military edge – it would aid the boys' ability to move en masse in the phalanx.

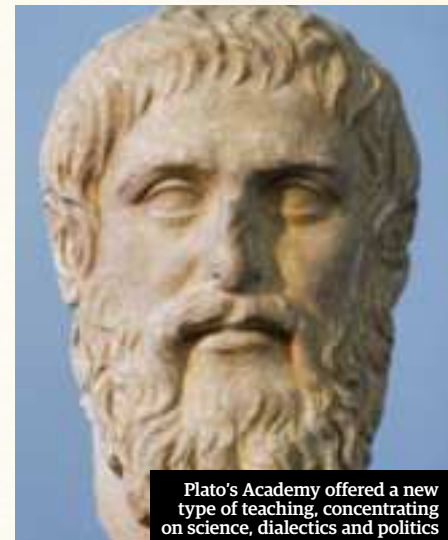
The culmination of the agoge came when the best students were instructed to hunt down and kill a slave. If caught, the boy would be disciplined – not for murder, but for his inability to commit the killing without being discovered. After the agoge, another exhaustive two years of military training would follow. Only then would the 20-year-old Spartan be considered a warrior ready to take his place on the battlefield.



Spartan education had one aim – to mould boys into warriors



Music and dance were taught to both boys and girls, although female education tended to be informal and at home



Plato's Academy offered a new type of teaching, concentrating on science, dialectics and politics

trainers), where students were schooled in sports such as wrestling, running, discus and javelin. Physical training was seen as necessary for good health, to improve one's appearance and, most importantly, to prepare boys for the citizen-army. As a result, the paidotribes were the most highly paid of all teachers.

Most boys' education ended when they reached adolescence and began to learn a trade. However, those from wealthier families would continue their paid education under sophists, itinerant philosopher-teachers who would travel from town to town teaching rhetoric. For young Greeks with political ambitions, rhetoric was a key skill. Being able to speak well, to sway the assembly or law courts, was the path to power.

Isocrates opened up a permanent school of rhetoric in Athens around 392 BCE, and his unusually high fees allowed him to amass a considerable fortune. However, not all Athenians

were convinced of the value in his lessons. Some Athenians blamed their problems on an overemphasis on rhetoric in the education system. As a democratic city, important decisions were made by votes of all Athenian male citizens meeting in an assembly. After a series of questionable decisions, Athens was conquered by Sparta. Many Athenians blamed their fall on education: not because citizens did not understand what they were voting on, but because teaching rhetoric allowed people to persuade the assembly to make poor decisions.

With the growth of philosophy in Greece, the idea of education as a lifelong passion began to emerge. Sometime after 387 BCE, when Plato is thought to have returned from his first visit to Italy and Sicily, he opened the Academy in Athens – often thought of as the first university. Essentially a club for interested and interesting minds, the Academy did not charge a fee for

lessons, but nor was it open to the public.

There was no formal curriculum or distinction between teachers and students, but members studied mathematics, science, dialectics and politics – unlike Isocrates, Plato placed little value on rhetoric. Among the Academy's pupils was Aristotle, who studied there for 20 years before tutoring Alexander the Great and founding his own school, the Lyceum.

Although formal education was limited to boys across most of Greece, wealthier girls were taught at home – often by a slave – and instructed how to read, write and play the lyre. Only in Sparta were girls given a formal education. As well as being taught how to sing, dance and play music, Spartan women were instructed in physical education and taught to run, wrestle and throw. The idea was that strong women would produce strong children, and that Spartan women could be used as a defence force in the last resort.





# What jobs did Greeks do?

For most Ancient Greek men, the ideal way to spend life was as a gentleman of leisure. Released from the need to work to live, such a gentleman could dedicate themselves to the political and social obligations placed upon them by the city-state. If a citizen was to play his role in direct democracy to full effect, he should be well informed and able to take part in the discussions and debates that moulded policy.

Yet the vast majority of Greeks were not so lucky that they could spend their days gossiping in the agora. More than half of Attica's population worked in the countryside - although many would have lived inside the city walls for security - tending small plots of land that they either owned themselves or rented from richer landlords in return for a percentage of the yield. Barley and wheat were the staple crops, supplemented by olives, cabbages, onions and lettuce.

For those who worked within the city walls, the majority were tradesmen who saw to the day-to-day needs of the population: blacksmiths, sculptors, painters, carpenters and the like. Many were citizens, although undoubtedly of a lower social class than the gentry, but others were foreign-born metics or slaves who were engaged in a trade on behalf of their owner. These slaves had a degree of independence in their lives compared to those who worked in the house as domestic servants, but any money they made would belong to their owner - although some were allowed to keep a small share. Among the slave artisans who are known to have worked in Athens was Lydos, who stamped 'Lydos the slave' on any vases he produced.

Some tradesmen could gain extraordinary wealth through their skilled hands. When Demosthenes the knife maker died, he left behind an estate equivalent to 220 times the annual salary of a labourer. When Cephalus of Syracuse set up a shield-making workshop in Piraeus, he had 120 slaves working under him. However, success on such a scale was rare, and Demosthenes and Cephalus were exceptions.

It wasn't just slaves who were employed by the more successful tradesmen - poorer citizens would be given jobs in workshops too, although being in the employ of other Greeks was considered an embarrassment. It was a status perhaps even lower than that of a slave, because at least a slave had a degree of job security.

As trade routes developed, connecting Greeks to each other and the wider world, including



Persia, India, Britain and China, city-states began to specialise in certain trades. Corinth was known for its ceramicists who crafted the pottery amphorae which carried olive oil and wine across Greece and the known world, although its ceramicists were later displaced by those from Athens. Corinth later found a new speciality in metalwork, while the best textiles came from Miletus and the best parchment from Kerameikos.

One result of increased trade and prosperity was the growth of a new industry, banking and money lending. Merchants who could not afford large outlays of money would borrow using letters of credit, repaying what they owed on the completion of their voyages. It led to the development of a complicated financial system that required some Ionian city-states to employ financial advisers to keep track of the flow of money. It also provided a rare opportunity for advancement. In Athens, a slave called Pasion showed such wit when running a money-lending table that he was rewarded with his freedom.

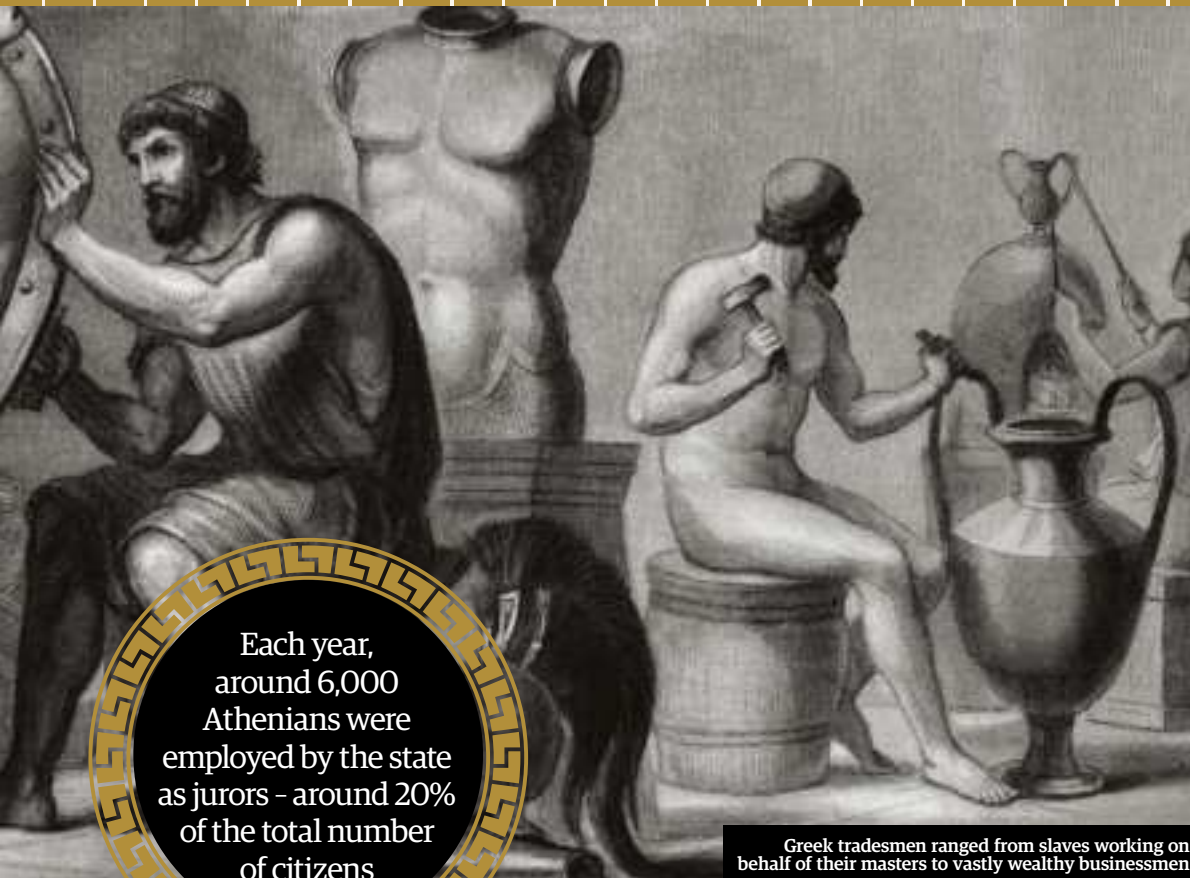
He inherited his old owners' banking business, established a shield factory and gifted 1,000 shields and a trireme to the state, for which he was rewarded with Athenian citizenship - a spectacular rise for a former slave.

Another offshoot from Athenian prosperity was an element of social security, one which allowed poor citizens to be employed as rowers in the navy and the elderly to serve as jurors. Tradesmen were employed to build grand civic buildings like the Parthenon. Those working for the state were paid one drachma per day, no matter what the work, and were expected to work from dawn to late afternoon, no matter what the season.

The one place where no Greek ever wanted to end up working was the mines. So horrific were the conditions there that slavery was almost ubiquitous - few free men would ever stoop so low. The silver mines at Laurium and gold mines at Mount Pangaeus claimed many lives, including those of young slave children who were tasked with crawling through the smallest tunnels, often 100 metres underground.

Few shops have been discovered by archaeologists - instead, tradesmen would sell their own wares on market days





Each year, around 6,000 Athenians were employed by the state as jurors - around 20% of the total number of citizens

Greek tradesmen ranged from slaves working on behalf of their masters to vastly wealthy businessmen

## Slavery to success

Not all slaves were condemned to a life of drudgery - these serfs escaped the shackles and made their life a success

### Aesop

Aesop was born into slavery and, although described as strikingly ugly, used his great mind to win his freedom and become an adviser to kings. He also wrote the *Fables*, a collection of folk tales with which every Greek child was familiar.



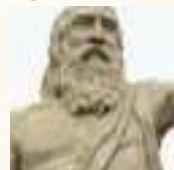
### Rhodopis

Known by a nickname that means 'rosy-cheeked', Rhodopis was a slave-prostitute who was taken to Egypt by her owner and bought her freedom by a client who had fallen for her beauty. She continued to work as a prostitute in Egypt, and stories even suggest that the Egyptian pharaoh made her his queen.



### Diogenes the Cynic

One of the founders of cynicism, the philosopher Diogenes found himself cast into slavery after being captured by pirates and sold to a Corinthian who wanted him to tutor his children. He remained in Corinth until his death, by which time he had been freed by his master.



### Phaedo of Elis

Taken prisoner by the Spartans in 402 BCE, Phaedo's beauty led to him becoming a slave-prostitute until he was bought his freedom by a friend of Socrates. Phaedo then became attached to the great philosopher and was present at his death, before returning to Elis and founding his own school.



Slaves working in the Laurium silver mines - possibly the worst job in Ancient Greece





The Greeks believed nine goddesses known as the Nine Muses inspired music, poetry and other arts

The construction of the Parthenon in Athens marked the beginning of a golden age of Greek art



# THE ARTS IN ANCIENT GREECE

From inventing drama to revolutionising sculpture, the Greeks produced many great works of art that continue to inspire us today

During the 5th century BCE, Athens dominated Greece politically, economically and culturally. Following the defeat of the Persians in 479 BCE, the Athenians organised a confederacy of allies to ensure the freedom of Greek city-states. Members of this so-called Delian League paid into a fund. However, with control of the funds and a reinforced fleet, Athens gradually turned the voluntary member states into subjects.

By 453 BCE, when the treasury was moved from the island of Delos to the Acropolis, Athens had become a wealthy imperial power. In an effort to consolidate his power through creating jobs and glorifying Athens, the general Pericles spent this Delian fund to support the city-state's artists and thinkers. Pericles' raiding of the treasury has been called one of the largest embezzlements in history, but it also led to a golden age in Greek art, producing some of the most marvellous creations of the ancient world.

## THE APEX OF ARCHITECTURE

Pericles paid the lion's share of the Delian fund to artisans to build temples and other public buildings. These were often made from limestone and marble rather than mud and timber to better

glory the gods (not to mention, Athens' reputation). The architects employed mathematics to design these buildings, often ensuring they were symmetrical, with eight columns at the front, 17 on the sides, and proportioned to a set 9:4 ratio, which the Greeks considered sacred.

The most famous of Pericles' funded projects was the magnificent

Parthenon. Built as a temple to the city's patron goddess, Athena, the Parthenon stood at the top of the Acropolis hill, so everyone in the city could see its tapered columns and intricately carved pediment for miles around. Built by the architects Ictinus and Callicrates, the Parthenon is often considered the peak of Classical architecture and, in particular, the best example of the Doric order.

Ancient Greek architecture was put into three types, or 'orders'. The Parthenon, like much of Western Greece, with its intentionally simplistic design and short, heavy columns was known as the Doric Order. The Ionic Order, with slender pillars tipped with curved, scroll-like flourishes, was favoured by Greek colonies in Asia Minor and the Aegean Islands. The Corinthian Order was the most ornate, decorating columns with carved leaves, was developed towards the end of the 5th century BCE.

Praxiteles'  
*Aphrodite of Knidos*  
was the first life-size  
sculpture of a nude  
woman in Greece





## How the stage was set

Every major Ancient Greek city boasted an open-air theatre. These arenas were arranged in a tiered semicircle, which offered the best view and acoustics so the entire audience could enjoy the performance. Early Greeks would have used the slope of a hillside for the same effect, but over time this was replaced with wooden bleachers and, by the 5th century BCE, stone benches. The Greeks called this block of seats the *theatron*, from which we derive the word 'theatre.'

Between the raised seats and the stage, there was flat often circular floor called the *orchestra*. Like the modern version of the word, this often housed musicians, but was principally where a play's chorus of 12 to 24 men sang and danced while providing a commentary to the actors on the main stage. Actors wore masks so that they could play multiple characters in a play. The masks may also have acted as megaphones boosting the actors' voices, so they could be heard by spectators up to 50 metres from the stage.

As Greek theatre evolved, dramatists began to employ new stage machinery: the *skene* was a painted backdrop that also doubled as a concealed area for actors to change costumes behind; the *mechane* was a crane that would hoist actors playing gods through the air; and the *ekkyklema* was a wheeled platform that would be rolled out of the *skene*'s central doors to reveal all of the dead characters (who always died off-stage).



The Dionysus Eleuthereus is the oldest known Greek theatre and could seat 14-15,000 spectators

The *Kroisos Kouros* is an example of the early Egyptian-inspired sculpture that Phidias and Polycleitus would later replace



The Siren Vase depicts a scene from Homer's *Odyssey*, one of the founding epics of Greek literature, in the red-figure pottery style

## BREAKING THE MOULD

One of the Parthenon's biggest draws was that it was decorated with extraordinary, lifelike sculptures. This included a colossal statue of Athena, which was 12 metres (39 feet) high and made from gold and ivory. This was created by Phidias, who was also one of the leading sculptors of the Classical period.

Earlier Greek statues had been rigidly posed, usually of male nudes standing to attention, with a stylised design governed by strict traditions. However, Phidias, along with sculptors Polycleitus, Myron and Praxiteles, used mathematical rules of proportions (similar to the Parthenon's architects) to create revolutionary realist figures with lifelike anatomy and posture for the first time. Gods and famous athletes were a popular subject, allowing the sculptors to chisel muscle systems in great detail and capture the natural movement of limbs, such as in Myron's *Discobolus*.

Unfortunately, not many Classical statues or sculptures survive today. While some were plundered by invading forces over the years and since lost, most were destroyed over time simply because stone breaks easily, while metal ones were melted down for reuse.

Based on those few that have been preserved, we think of these statues being made of lily-white marble. But archaeologists using ultraviolet light have proven that the Greeks painted their statues in vivid colours, with time and weather stripping the hues away.

Myron's *Discobolus* was an early example of the revolutionary realism Greek sculptors achieved





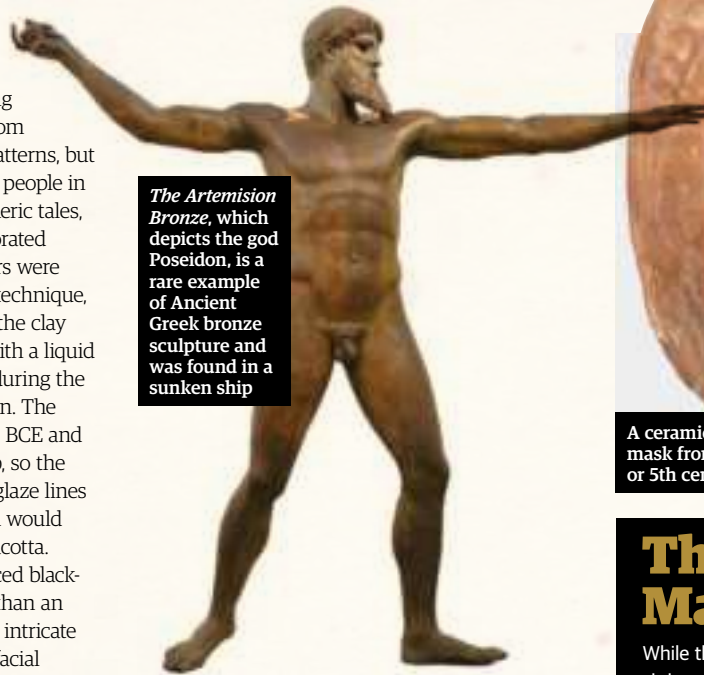
## POTTED POTS

The Greeks were famous for their clay pots, with vase painting greatly improving in the Classical Period. Early examples from 900-700 BCE only featured geometric patterns, but by 600-323 BCE vase paintings depicted people in everyday scenes, heroic deeds from Homeric tales, legends of the gods, and even commemorated sporting achievements. Initially characters were painted onto pots using the black-figure technique, which involved sketching the motif into the clay with a sharp tool, then painting over it with a liquid clay called slip, which would turn black during the firing, while the background was left plain. The red-figure technique was invented in 525 BCE and involved painting the whole pot with slip, so the background would blacken, while using glaze lines and dilute washes to paint figures, which would oxidise better during firing and stay terracotta. The red-figure technique gradually replaced black-figure because the use of a brush rather than an incision allowed potters to produce more intricate and naturalistic anatomy, garments and facial expressions, reflecting the realism trend.

## THE BIRTH OF THEATRE

Greek drama originated in the ancient hymns that were sung to honour the gods. In 534 BCE, a wandering bard called Thespis astounded audiences at the Great Dionysia, an annual festival in Athens established by the tyrant Peisistratos, which featured singing and dancing to honour Dionysus, the god of wine. Thespis added a speech to his chorus, reciting poetry as if he was the characters whose lines he was reading, thus inventing acting. Later, Aeschylus, father of the Greek tragedy, introduced dramatic conflict by adding a second actor, while the playwright Sophocles added a third part. Though acting came to dominate drama, the chorus remained an important part of Greek plays, providing a commentary on the actions of the main characters.

As it evolved, Greek theatre developed three genres: tragedy, comedy and satyr. Comedy mocked powerful Athenians for their vanity and foolishness. The first master of comedy was the playwright Aristophanes. Much later Menander wrote comedies about ordinary people and made his plays more like modern-day sitcoms. Tragedy covered the themes of love, loss, pride, the abuse of power and the fraught relationships between men and gods. Typically the main protagonist of a tragedy commits terrible crimes without realising how foolish and arrogant



*The Artemision Bronze, which depicts the god Poseidon, is a rare example of Ancient Greek bronze sculpture and was found in a sunken ship*



*A ceramic theatre mask from the 6th or 5th century BCE*

he has been. Then, as he realises his error, the world crumbles around him.

The three great playwrights of tragedy were Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, all of whom lived in Athens during the Age of Pericles, when Peisistratos' dictatorship had been replaced by democracy and free speech. Satyr plays were performed between the acts of tragedies, mocking the plight of the tragedy's characters.

## ENDURING LEGACY

The golden age of Greek art didn't last long, though it did last longer than Athens' political and economic superiority. While the city was bankrupt and exhausted after the 30-year-long Peloponnesian War, Athenian sculptures continued to lead the way into the 4th century BCE.

In fact, the legacy of the art developed in this era echoed down the years. First, the Greeks culture was hastily appropriated by the

Roman Empire, and in turn the Byzantine Empire. Classical art was later rediscovered and inspired Renaissance painters and sculptors like Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo to pursue realism, while William Shakespeare drew on Sophocles to write his own tragedies. Neoclassicism, drawing on Greek mythology and realist art, was all the rage during the 18th and 19th centuries, when buildings like the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC, and the British Museum in London were constructed as direct homages to the Parthenon.

The playwright Sophocles is believed to have penned over 100 plays, but only seven survive today

## The Elgin Marbles

While the Romans carried off Phidias' giant statue of Athena in the 5th century BCE, many of the Parthenon's finest carved friezes were taken by the British Empire around 2,300 years later. However, they did ask permission first.

In 1800, Lord Elgin was the British ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, which governed Greece at that time. Finding the Parthenon in ruins, he asked if he could hire some artists to copy all of the important pieces of Ancient Greek art. The Ottomans responded that he could and "take away any pieces of stone with old inscriptions or figures thereon". Elgin took them at their word and, between 1802 and 1812, he shipped around half of the surviving statues of the Parthenon to England.

The move proved controversial, with the Romantic poet and politician Lord Byron describing Elgin as a vandal who had defaced the Greek monument, while others praised him for preserving the artworks. The British government eventually bought the statues from Elgin in 1816 (for much less money than he had hoped), giving them to the British Museum to put on public display. Today the Greeks contest the British Museum's right to the so-called 'Elgin Marbles' and their relocation back to Athens is widely debated.



*The Elgin Marbles on display in the British Museum, London, but for how long?*



# ANCIENT GREEK THEATRES

We discover how these massive amphitheatres were built and used

**W**ith the invention of tragedies in the late 6th century BCE, comedies in the 5th century BCE and the satyr play tragicomedies around the 1st century BCE, the Ancient Greeks had to build a huge number of impressive theatres to do their plays justice. As the centuries went on - and the popularity of the theatre grew and grew - the buildings had to expand and adapt to meet the demand. Indeed, many of these semicircular amphitheatres could seat well over 10,000 people and were used frequently during religious festivals such as the Dionysia, a major celebration centred around the god Dionysus.

While the theatres of the Ancient Greeks began as simple clearings with a smattering of wooden benches for the audience to sit on, before long they had grown into full-blown sanctuary-like facilities. These included large banks of stone seats, a vast orchestra and acting area, a complex backstage network of rooms, entrances and trapdoors, as well as a wide selection of ornate and decorative scenic backdrops. These features, along with the Ancient Greeks' love for festivals, led theatres to take a central role in cementing and spreading Greek culture - something the Romans would later adopt for themselves.

Theatres were made primarily out of stone, often with the amphitheatre's seats placed into the side of a hill for extra support, while traditional construction methods for civic buildings and temples were transferred for the production of colonnades, scenery and entranceways. Interestingly, the greatest technical feat in constructing many of these theatres were the excellent acoustics, with the shape and angle of the seating arrangement and materials (limestone was a popular choice, for instance) serving as acoustic traps. These would filter out low-frequency sounds like spectator chatter and enhance the high frequencies of the performers' voices.

© Sandra Doyle/The Art Agency

## Tour of the theatre

Take a guided tour of the theatrical building at the heart of Ancient Greek entertainment

**Thyrovma**  
These structures were stone pillars into which vertical grooves were cut. The grooves received the painted background panels and held them in place.

**Episkenion**  
The upper storey of the skene. Accessed by a ramp or stairwells, it provided an additional acting/singing space.

**Kerkis**  
The koilon was composed of a series of wedge-shaped seating blocks (kerkides) arranged in a semicircle. These were divided by various walkways and stairs.

**Prohedria**  
This was the general term used for any stone seating within the theatre - but is sometimes used to specifically describe the honorific seats in front of the orchestra.

**Analemmata**  
Often the theatre's koilon was built into a hillside, which acted as a natural brace. However, the outer edges could be left exposed and so were secured by analemmata - ie retaining walls.



## Pinakes

Pinakes were the painted wooden panels used as changeable backdrops to indicate where the action was taking place. They were inserted into the skene's slotted thyromata.

## Skene

This background structure was used by the actors and theatre workers to change costumes, assemble props and operate any mechanical apparatus. It would often resemble a Greek temple.

## Diazoma

Midway up the koilon a semicircular walkway, known as the diazoma, split the amphitheatre's seating area in two.

## Parodos

Both actors and audience members could enter through parodoi into the theatre proper. Typically, entrances were located either side of the skene.

## Thymele

This was an altar-like structure used by the leader of the chorus to direct the other singers, much like a conductor. It was located at the centre of the orchestra.

## Koilon

The koilon was the theatre's seating area, though it was sometimes used to describe the theatre as a whole too.

## Proskenion

The proskenion was the platform/stage directly in front of the skene. It typically included a colonnade and wide open acting space located in front of the prohedria.

## The role of masks

The wearing of masks in a theatre setting was not invented by the Ancient Greeks but was a key part of all their productions. For one thing, masks were closely connected to Ancient Greek religion, with many of their gods – who famously liked to meddle in the affairs of humans – depicted in each performance. The masks worn by the actors therefore both allowed them to transform into a deity visually, as well as venerate them in a form of ritual performance; indeed, records indicate that many masks were burned after each show as a sacrifice.

Secondly, masks enabled each actor to be better seen by the audience, with exaggerated features such as noses and mouths, as well as facial expressions, more easily transmitted at a distance. The hiding of the face also enabled each actor to play multiple roles – especially female characters, as women were banned from acting within the theatre at this time.

One of the most common deity masks worn was that of Dionysus, who among other hedonistic roles – such as the god of wine and revelry – was also the god of the theatre.

## Klimakes

Located at either side of the kerkides were klimakes, narrow stone steps that led from the bottom of the koilon to the top. They were the primary means of reaching the epitheatron.

## Epitheatron

Any seating above the diazoma was part of the epitheatron. Seats here cost less than those below the diazoma.





# THE ART OF ARCHITECTURE

The Greeks didn't just build some of the world's most iconic buildings; they inspired future generations to build even more

**M**ore than 2,000 years after the heyday of their ancient civilisation, Greek and Greek-influenced buildings are instantly recognisable. Many are iconic. Think of the skeletal remains on the Acropolis, framed against the Athenian skyline, one of the most famous modern cityscapes. A huge number of public structures in the Western world from the Renaissance onwards are directly influenced by classical Greek architectural style, including famous examples such as the British Museum's façade in London, the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, and the United States Capitol in Washington, DC. The characteristic columns and pediments, arranged with careful attention to symmetry and proportion, are obvious and distinctive wherever they appear; they are emblematic of the ancient Mediterranean world and its civilisation.

The legacy isn't only physical; Greek architectural principles were the foundation for Roman - and then later Western - theory and practice, in particular for public architecture, while the Greeks also invented types of buildings, such as stadiums and theatres. Even buildings that don't look obviously 'classical' often obey the rules of proportion that were established by the Greeks.

The classical Greek style is most often seen in public buildings, and this is not by chance. The classical Greek world (roughly from 500 BCE to the time of Alexander the Great in the late 4th century BCE) had few mansions or palaces. The aristocracy and very rich didn't live in stately

homes or anything similar; that was to come later. What we think of as typical Greek architecture was seen in public buildings - but above all in temples. These structures were glorifications of gods and cities, even if by extension they were also glorifications of those who paid for them.

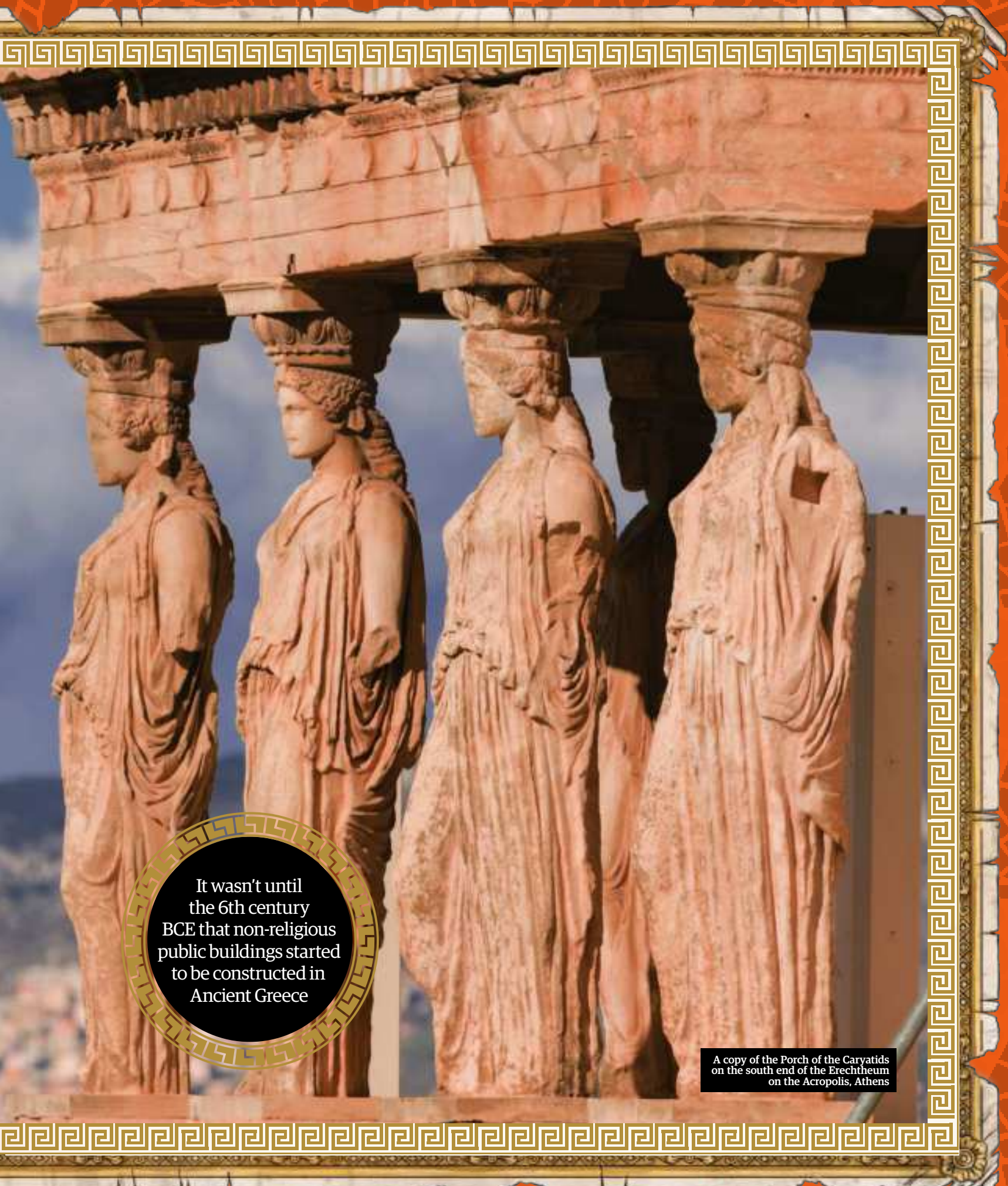
This public character explains one of the peculiarities of the time. Although the Greek countryside was full of people in the Classical period - by the standards of the time - it has almost no notable architecture. For the most part, there is only the odd isolated rural temple. By far the greatest number of 'important' or (in our sense) 'typical' buildings were in urban centres.

In fact, as time went on, the centres became increasingly crowded and even jumbled, especially in the more prosperous cities. This raised early town-planning arguments, with some people proposing and putting into practice organised city layouts on a rectangular gridiron pattern, and others arguing that this way of doing things was fundamentally un-Greek. The philosopher Aristotle even argued that sprawling centres and haphazard streets were a good defence against invaders, because they were confusing. Given how often the Greek cities were at war, especially with each other, this was no small point. It wasn't until the Hellenistic age, after Alexander the Great's conquests, that regular town planning would come into its own.

All of the early 'prestige' buildings were temples, and throughout the early and classical periods, they would remain pre-eminent. At first, they were largely constructed from wood, rubble and clay. As

One thing that didn't survive in the original structures or the later imitations was colour - the Greeks painted buildings





It wasn't until the 6th century BCE that non-religious public buildings started to be constructed in Ancient Greece

A copy of the Porch of the Caryatids on the south end of the Erechtheum on the Acropolis, Athens





## The Greek wonders of the world

Awe-inspiring architecture, from striking statues to impressive temples

### The Statue of Zeus at Olympia

This 12-metre-high statue of Zeus was the work of Phidias. Zeus's skin was made from ivory, and his robes from hammered gold. With the advent of Christianity, however, the temple fell into neglect and, having survived an earthquake, the statue was finally lost forever – possibly to fire.

### The Temple of Artemis at Ephesus

Constructed over 120 years in what is now Turkey, the temple was completed in 550 BCE. In 356 BCE, Herostratus burned it to the ground, saying that by destroying it he would earn everlasting fame. It was twice rebuilt, but destroyed forever in 401 CE.

### The Mausoleum of Halicarnassus

The tomb of Persian satrap Mausolus is in Halicarnassus, birthplace of Herodotus. Halicarnassus was in Persian-occupied Asia Minor, and is now the city of Bodrum in Turkey. After Mausolus died in 353 BCE, his wife commissioned the tomb. She joined him in it when she died.

### The Colossus of Rhodes

The island of Rhodes built a 34-metre-high statue of its patron, Helios, god of the Sun, from 292–280 BCE to mark its victory over an invading army. Melted-down bronze and iron from the weapons of the defeated were used extensively in the construction of it.

### The Lighthouse of Alexandria

Sometimes called the Pharos (it was built on the island of Pharos), the lighthouse was almost 140 metres high. Its mirror reflected sunlight by day and firelight by night. Built by Ptolemy I Soter around 280 BCE, it was damaged in several earthquakes, and by 1480 it had gone.

so often, the Greeks then learned a trick, or rather a lot of tricks, from the Egyptians, and started to use finished stone. This revolutionised Greek architecture, and the template for later building started to be established.

This emphasis on religious buildings accounts for one of the defining features of Greek public architecture. Their temples were not churches, or even cathedrals; they were not meant to be worshipped in. They were quite literally houses for gods. Inside might be the cult statue and past offerings to the god – quite sumptuous treasure, or even the city's financial reserves in some cases – and a few relatively simple rooms. The altar would be outside the temple. Temples were designed to be looked at – from the outside – not actually used.

This might explain why you can call Greek buildings many things – elegant, imposing,

magnificent – but not comfortable or lived-in. They are there to strike awe; to be gazed on and admired. This tendency persisted to a large degree with secular public buildings until in the Hellenistic period architects began to also give the neglected interiors their full attention.

Greek architectural styles are traditionally split into three 'orders': Doric, Ionic and Corinthian. The Doric order was developed in the Peloponnese peninsula in southern mainland Greece in the 7th century BCE. The Ionic order followed in the next century, and originated east of the Aegean Sea, while the Corinthian order is essentially a later offshoot of the Ionic, and didn't become important until the Roman period.

Doric, the earliest and most popular order, was especially important in mainland Greece and the western colonies. It was also a transitional style of sorts, taking the old wooden architecture and

In technical terms, 'orders' were arrangements of types of columns to support the entablature, the upper part of a building

**"Their temples were not churches; they were not meant to be worshipped in. They were quite literally houses for gods"**

The temple of Apollo at Corinth. It was built around 540 BCE, making these some of the older standing ruins in Greece







The Tholos of Delphi at the temple of Athena, near the site of the famous oracle. Note the circular form

remaking it with stone. Ionic was a lighter, more elaborate and decorative style, with Corinthian being a further development of this trend.

One of the remarkable features of classical architecture was its consistency over the Greek world, spread as it was over the mainland and islands, Asia Minor, Sicily and mainland Italy, and Spain. A citizen from Syracuse in Greek Sicily could travel to Corinth and in the Peloponnese, and find a familiar style of public buildings. Leading architects and sculptors - who were closely involved in architecture, with sculptures and friezes being an integral part of public buildings - travelled widely and freely between cities. There was a great deal of variation and individuality in the details, but the essential style was coherent. This was to change somewhat in the Hellenistic period, when the focus switched from community to individual.

The historical and cultural context obviously played a great part in the development of architecture. The classical period was above all the public period, where great buildings were temples or civic structures in the agora. There were great theatres and sports stadiums. Nowhere was this more true than in mighty, rich and democratic Athens. In the west, buildings might still be the pet

projects of individual rulers - of tyrants - but for the most part, they were truly public.

Later, after Alexander's conquests, the re-establishment of monarchy in the Greek world, and close contact with the East, this changed, and the emphasis shifted from the public to the individual. There was greater diversity of building types and styles. Nonetheless, the results were still unquestionably recognisable as 'Greek'.

The most obvious legacy was seen in Rome. The Romans absorbed, learned from and expanded the architectural principles of the Greeks. Their superior engineering skill - and perhaps confidence - saw them employing arches, vaults and domes, which the Greeks mostly avoided, and otherwise extending the range of what was possible. They paid much more attention to private buildings, to villas and palaces and stately living. Their vast empire spread their architecture - and ultimately the Greek legacy - even further.

The legacy isn't only physical, of course. Greek architectural principles were the very foundation for later Western theory and practice, in particular for public architecture. And every time we take a seat in a stadium or theatre, we are sitting in a Greek invention.

Doric columns were relatively simple and didn't have bases, unlike the Ionic and Corinthian ones

## The new and improved Acropolis

The original Acropolis buildings were destroyed by the Persians in 480 BCE, and the new buildings - constructed in the second half of the 5th century - were a statement of civic pride. The Acropolis was a public space, built by and for the Athenian people. Previously, undertakings of this magnitude had been the preserve of great kings and emperors.

The Parthenon temple of the goddess Athena on the Acropolis was unprecedentedly vast, and built entirely from marble - 22,000 tons of it. Its size allowed for many new features.

One of the most notable aspects of the new Acropolis was the blending of the Doric and Ionic orders. The Parthenon was essentially Doric, but with an Ionic frieze, while the Erechtheum - a temple for multiple cults - was Ionic. The Propylaea (gateway) contains columns from both orders.

It is often said that the Acropolis and the three major buildings it contained are - individually and collectively - the culmination and high point of the classical tradition. They blend tradition and innovation in subtly balanced precision, with extraordinary attention given to every detail.

It was a bold statement by the Athenian democracy, made possible by the wealth she was garnering from her empire, and the confidence she had gained from her success in the Persian wars.

The Acropolis is set above the city of Athens. The original was painted, probably in shades of red, blue and gold





# HOW DEMOCRACY WAS BORN

The city-state of Athens brought the foundations and the functioning of democracy to the world in the 5th century BCE

**T**he origins of democratic government have long been attributed to Ancient Greece, and the city-state of Athens is seen as its cradle. While Athens did indeed produce a functioning democratic process, it was not alone among the city-states in developing the elements of democracy. However, Athenian democracy proved to be the most enduring among the ancients, and its history is well documented in comparison to the others.

Even as Athens reached the height of its power and prestige, the seeds of democracy were being sown. In the early 6th century, Solon initiated government reforms that enhanced the participation of the citizenry. Around 508 BCE, Cleisthenes presided over a flourishing democracy, and in the mid 5th century BCE, Ephialtes introduced reforms that further altered and refined the operation of the Athenian government. The first known functioning democracy came into being in the city of Athens, and those other city-states that initiated democratic institutions were likely to have emulated the evolving Athenian model.

The Athenian version was a direct democracy, as those eligible to participate cast their votes

directly in matters of law and justice. The process extended beyond Athens proper and into the Attic peninsula; however, all inhabitants of the city and its environs were not full participants in the democratic process. The population of greater Athens is estimated to have been around 250,000 or more during the 5th century BCE, and included slaves and non-Athenian residents.

The first test for participation in democracy was proof of citizenship. Men who were over 18 years of age were required to attest that they were not slaves and that their parents were born in Athens.

Women were excluded. Only 30,000 to 50,000 residents were eligible, and scholars assert that the number never surpassed more than 30% of the city-state's population.

The emergence of Athenian democracy was preceded by other forms of government that existed at one time or another for at

least 300 years after the founding of the city-state, or polis, around 900 BCE. The earliest government in the polis was a monarchy.

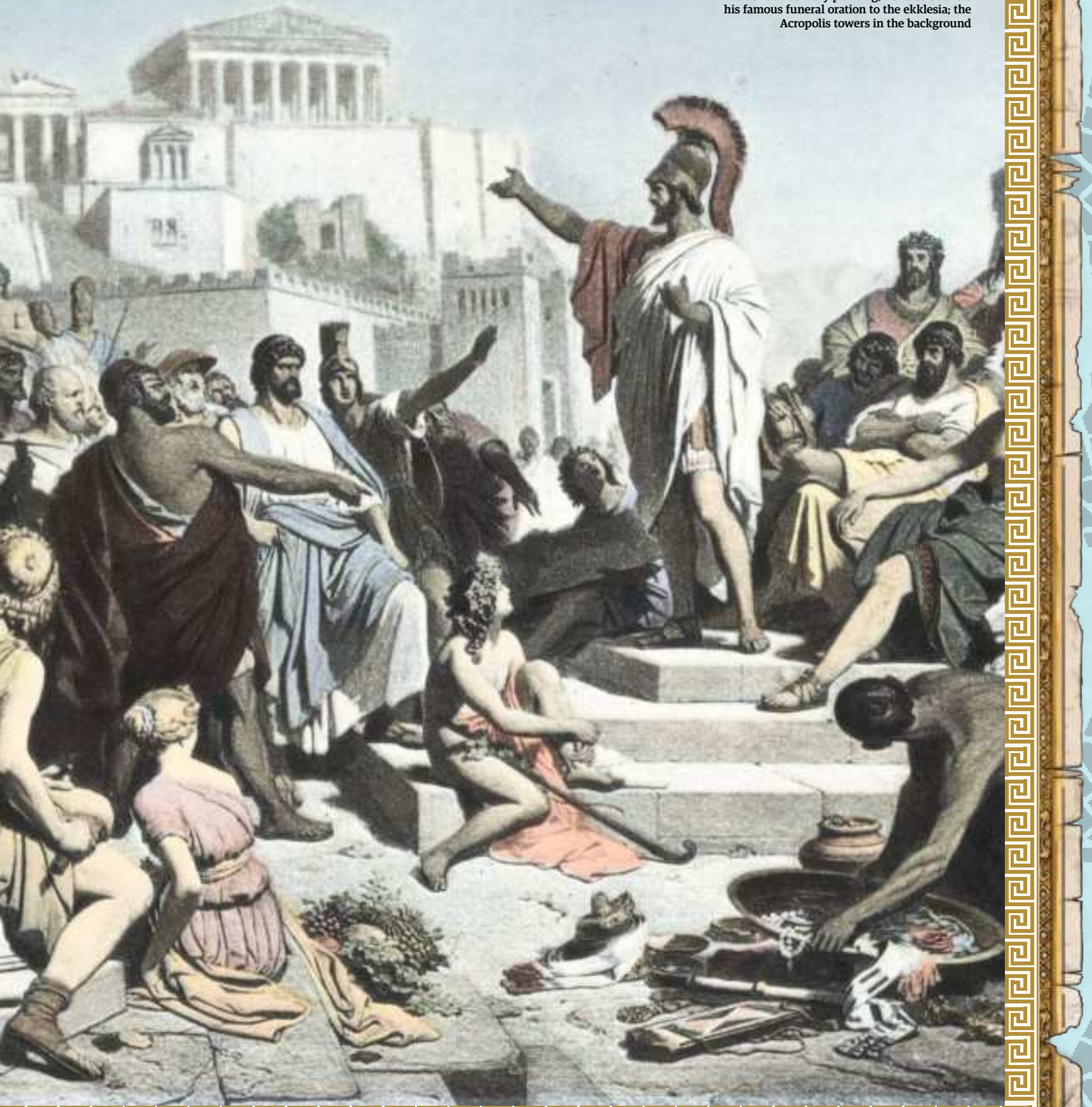
A king, surrounded by a close group of advisors from the nobility, ruled for about 100 years. Prosperity, however, brought the demise of the monarchy. Men who owned property and gained some measure of wealth through trade

Democracy is derived from the Greek words 'demos' (people) and 'kratos' (power) and is literally translated as 'people power'





In this 19th-century painting, Pericles delivers his famous funeral oration to the ekklesia; the Acropolis towers in the background







and commerce began to desire a voice in their own government.

These newly influential noblemen began to convene on the Areopagus, a hill near the city, and took their name from it. The Areopagus developed into a body that asserted political power and elected nine 'rulers', known as archons, to govern the city-state in an oligarchy. The archons did not exercise absolute power. Their decisions were subject to the approval of the Areopagus.

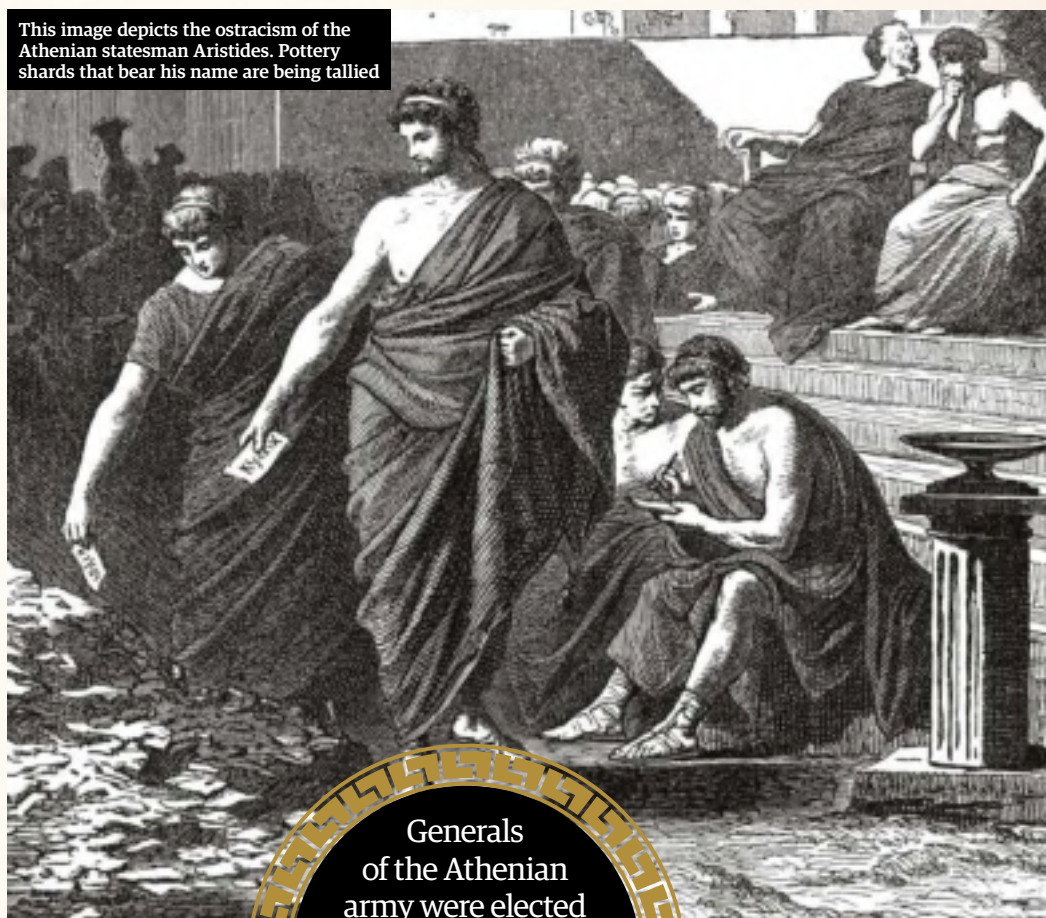
By the mid 7th century, the social class structure had become well defined. The wealthy, aristocratic ruling class, including members of the Areopagus, fell into disfavour as workers and members of lower classes resented their continuing affluence, which was often maintained at the expense of those less fortunate in the city-state. Greek society devolved into civil unrest, and amid the chaos assertive men came forward, promising to restore order. Often with the support of the people, these so-called 'tyrants' claimed power in a radical departure from traditional forms of accession, such as wealth or family bloodlines.

## SOLON SOWS SEEDS

In 594 BCE, Solon, a statesman, poet, and archon, was elevated to rule in Athens. During difficult economic times, many Athenians had been forced to seek financial support from the aristocratic class. In exchange for loans, they were compelled to mortgage their lands and even offer themselves and family members as collateral. Often enough, such practices resulted in burdensome debt that could not be retired. Farmers and merchants found themselves enslaved to the wealthy. A financial crisis loomed, particularly as farmers lost the use of their lands, and economic collapse threatened the foundation of Athenian prosperity.

Solon set about redressing the inequity of a social structure based on wealth alone. He developed a constitution that divided Athenian society into four classes based on financial

This image depicts the ostracism of the Athenian statesman Aristides. Pottery shards that bear his name are being tallied



Generals of the Athenian army were elected to their commands rather than chosen by lottery, as some other officials were chosen

capacity and allowing members of the top three to serve as archons. Every Athenian was accorded the right to appeal a legal decision to a jury, reducing the power of the nine archons in such matters in favour of a larger, more equitable body. Solon then ended the custom of loans secured by an individual's freedom.

Prior to Solon's reforms, the council of the Areopagus, former archons themselves, had elected nine new archons each year.

Therefore, only aristocrats were elected to the body. Solon's constitution provided that all Athenian

citizens should vote for a slate of candidates for the position of archon. From among these candidates, nine individuals were then selected by lot. Under the constitution of Solon, the Areopagus was charged as the guardian of the law and a council of 400 citizens formed a more representative assembly. While retaining certain aspects of the oligarchy, Solon then brought forward certain aspects of the democracy that would later come to pass in Athens.

In an era of tyrants, Solon was certainly not one of them. Although he came from an aristocratic family and was probably given the opportunity for self-aggrandisement, he chose to champion the cause of the lower classes. In one last selfless act, he required the Athenians to abide by the model constitution that had been put in place for ten years. He then left the city-state of Athens for an extended period of time.

## The Laws of Draco

Around 621 BCE, Draco, the first recorded legislator of Ancient Greece, is believed to have introduced a written legal code. The written code replaced a system of oral and tribal law with one that was more uniform and intended for interpretation by a court of law. The code itself is remembered as quite harsh, and it is from the author's name that the modern word 'draconian' is derived.

Little is known of Draco's life, although he is believed to have been a member of the nobility from the region of Attica. He was born around 650 BCE and died at the age of approximately 50.

Draco's code provided the first written constitution of Athens, and the people had requested that he prepare it - although they were unaware that it would be so severe. The lawgiver was once supposedly asked why the sentence of death was so prevalent in the code. He responded that those convicted of minor offenses deserved the punishment while he could think of no greater penalty for major crimes. The code also favoured nobility and the aristocratic class. For reasons that remain unclear, Draco was banished from Athens to the island of Aegina, where he spent much of his life.



The wave of democracy that had begun to build in Athens during the early 6th century BCE was advanced somewhat ironically during the rule of the tyrant Peisistratos and his sons, Hippias and Hipparchus, which lasted about 50 years from 560 to 510 BCE. Using his army of mercenaries to support his rule, Peisistratos nevertheless maintained the goodwill of the people and even expanded the power of the governing bodies established by Solon. He continued to weaken the influence of the aristocracy and encouraged trade and agriculture while presiding over the redistribution of some lands on the Attic peninsula. The Alcmaeonidae family enlisted assistance from a Spartan army to eventually depose Hippias.

A brief struggle for supremacy in Athens ensued. Isagoras was elected an archon in 508 BCE, but his rival, Cleisthenes, a member of the Alcmaeonidae family, went directly to the people for support and gained much favour among all of the lower classes. When Isagoras summoned the Spartan army again to quash Cleisthenes, the Athenians protested heavily and then sent Isagoras and the Spartan army packing.

## CLEISTHENES AND FULL BLOOM

During the last decade of the 6th century BCE, Cleisthenes elevated Athenian democracy to prominence and became revered as its father. Although his period of rule and reform was brief, lasting only six years from 508 to 502 BCE, the impact of his measures was enormous, and it would last for two centuries.

Cleisthenes effectively eroded the influence of the aristocratic class and its distinction from the middle and working classes with the introduction of reforms that shaped a new consciousness among Athenians, a new perspective on themselves and on their relationship to the city-state. Cleisthenes made the village, known as the 'deme', the basic political unit of the new society. Rather than identifying themselves as individuals tied to families, citizens began to call themselves by names associated with their home villages. This emphasis on geographic location rather than lineage fostered a culture of 'Athenian identity' rather than a family link and helped to prevent the rise of another tyrant to challenge authority.

Each deme was administered by a demarch, whose responsibilities were similar to a town mayor and included placing individuals in three groups or 'thirds', including verified males who



The Areopagus, or Hill of Ares, was the scene of meetings of the Athenian governmental body

were over 18 and therefore citizens, those citizens selected to serve on the council, and those who were eligible for participation in the assembly. To further engage every Athenian citizen in the process of government, Cleisthenes reorganised

the social structure further, effectively abolishing an old system of tribes and replacing it with a new framework. Each of the thirds was assigned to one of ten new tribes. Each tribe contained three thirds, one from the city, one from the coastal area, and one from the interior of the greater city-state. In turn, each tribe sent 50 citizens annually to serve on a new council of 500, increased in number from 400 since the time of Solon.

The new structure brought together citizens from all areas of Athens. The tribes became tremendously influential in the democratic process, while the citizenry was thoroughly engaged - all the way to the local level. Cleisthenes possessed the forethought to

eliminate the possibility of regional or provincial politics from undermining the process with the passage of time. He asserted that once a citizen was registered in a particular deme, he then remained with that deme for the purposes of governmental participation regardless of whether or not he relocated to another area of the city-state of Athens.

To add an air of legitimacy and historical context to the new social and political apparatus, Cleisthenes named the ten new tribes after one of the city-state's heroes of antiquity. These were supposedly handed down by Apollo, the sun god, through the oracle of Delphi. The ten heroes included Pandion, Oeneus, Leos, Cecrops, Hippothoon, Erechtheus, Antiochus, Acamas, Aegeus and Ajax. These heroes were further immortalised and revered with the placement of their statues in the agora of Athens, near the area where new laws and proclamations were publicly placed for the people to view.

## STRUCTURE AND STRENGTH

Athenian democracy is remembered historically as a sometimes raucous, litigious and contentious institution in its practical application. Still, it fundamentally revolutionised the role of

Athenian women were restricted in movement in public places and often segregated from the male population



government in the lives of the people and their own ability to influence the course of events. Although full participation was denied to many residents of Athens, the emergence of the democratic process was nevertheless one of the most profound events in the history of the Western world. The reformed structure introduced by Cleisthenes around 507 BCE retained institutions whose roots lay with Solon nearly a century earlier.

Cleisthenes called his system of government *demokratia*, or 'rule by the people'. Its basic structure included three pillars that served to maintain equity, dispense justice, and write and interpret laws.

The assembly, or *ekklesia*, was the central governing authority in Athens. In its early period the *ekklesia* met only ten times per year. However, that number was later expanded to 40 times, while called meetings might also take place. The meetings were open to any citizen of Athens and were held in a theatre on a hillside called *Pnyx* just west of the great Athenian Acropolis. The *ekklesia* undertook the writing of new laws and the revision of those already in force. It deliberated questions of foreign policy, including whether or not to go to war, and it held public officials accountable for their conduct.

Adult male citizens considered it their responsibility to attend assembly meetings, but duties with the armed forces, the harvest, or other activities usually limited the gatherings to about 5,000 people. At times attendance was compulsory. Slaves would extend a rope stained

## "The authority of the boule was extensive, ranging from the disposition of government property to livestock"

in red across the agora to herd citizens into an *ekklesia* meeting. Those whose clothing bore telltale crimson marks were then fined. By the late 5th century BCE attendees to the *ekklesia* were paid for their time. Only the first 6,000 to arrive received compensation, and the red rope was still in use - as a barrier to the late arrivals.

The council of 500 that convened under Cleisthenes was called the '*boule*'. Those 50 men chosen from the ten tribes to comprise the council served terms of one year each. The authority of the *boule* was extensive, ranging from the disposition of government property from ships to livestock and receiving emissaries from other city-states.

The *boule* met every day, and since it was responsible for much of the routine conduct of government-related business in Athens probably exerted the most significant influence on the lives of the people. The primary function of the *boule* was to determine those matters of state that were worthy of presentation before the *ekklesia*. Therefore, the *boule* exerted tremendous influence in the political life of the city-state and the democratic process.

Interestingly, those who would occupy positions within the *boule* were determined by lot rather than ballot. The reason was simple: an individual chosen through a drawing could attribute his selection to pure luck. An election, however, was subject to outside influences such as bribery or back room dealing. Elections might also perpetuate a permanently entitled class of officials within the *boule* over time and promote the temptation for personal gain. Again, the lottery approach would safeguard against such a situation. A tantalising question remains, though, as historians have noted with some chagrin that certain citizens and members of their families seemed to serve with much greater regularity than others. Were they just lucky?

An integral component of Athenian democracy, the court system, or '*dikasteria*', was a functional marvel. Each day a pool of citizens, males over 30 years old, assembled. From their number, 500 were chosen to serve as jurors. The people brought cases directly to court. There was no police force in the city-state to arrest and charge an individual; therefore, the jury held tremendous power in the discharge of cases that other citizens

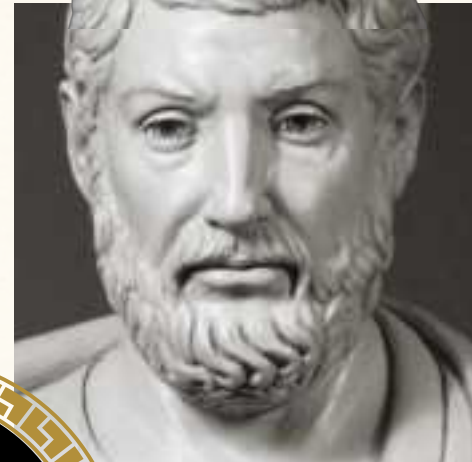
The *ekklesia*, or assembly, retained the authority to grant special powers to the council of 500, or *boule*, during an emergency

This 19th-century engraving depicts the artist's impression of the agora, or marketplace, of ancient Athens





The ruins of the Pnyx, the meeting place of the ancient *ekklesia*, lie empty; the speaker's platform remains in the centre



Cleisthenes is revered as the father of Athenian democracy, which developed into a vibrant government process following his reforms

Citizens blamed their democratic government for the disastrous expedition against Syracuse in 413 BCE

presented during arguments for and against any accused party.

Public cases were argued first by the prosecutor and then by the defendant. Each was allowed a single speech of three hours' duration, and each was timed with a water clock. If a case was to be heard in private, the time for arguments was significantly diminished. A case was forbidden to last longer than a single day, and jurors were routinely vocal, loudly expressing their support or doubt of a certain point. In either case, when both sides had presented their points of view, there was minimal discussion among the jurors - no time allotted for formal deliberations - and the vote on guilt or innocence was taken.

There were no prohibitions as to what kinds of cases could be brought before an Athenian jury, which sometimes allowed individuals to drag enemies into the public arena for embarrassment or vengeance. Jurors were required to interpret the motive of the accuser or plaintiff as well as the guilt or innocence of the defendant. Beginning around 462 BCE, jurors began receiving pay for their services with the expectation that

compensation made the job an endeavour in which every citizen might participate, not just the aristocratic, wealthy, or those who could afford to lose wages from their regular vocation.

At approximately the same time, Ephialtes began a successful effort to further reduce the influence of the Areopagus. He prosecuted members of the body for poor administration and successfully divided much of its remaining power between the *ekklesia*, the *boule*, and the *dikasteria*. When Ephialtes was finished, the Areopagus was no longer the guardian of the constitution, but merely a court in itself that adjudicated cases involving murder and religion.

## TWILIGHT OF DEMOCRACY

Ephialtes was assassinated in 461 BCE, allowing his rival Pericles to consolidate power. While the democracy continued to function, the influence of

Pericles became so great that he was deemed the "first citizen of Athens". Controversy surrounds the rule of Pericles. Some historians believe he advanced democracy through measures that benefitted the lower classes, while others assert that his personal power and sway over the government actually contributed to its decline.

Democratic ideals in Athens endured despite challenges during the years of the Peloponnesian War, including the short-lived return of an oligarchy in 411 BCE. Defeat at the hands of the Spartans in 404 brought the rule of the Thirty Tyrants, a puppet government that lasted only a year before the return of democracy. In 338 BCE, however, the irresistible tide of the Macedonian army, with King Philip II at its head, conquered most of Greece, ending the noble experiment in Athenian democracy.

Despite its relatively short period of existence in Athens, the concepts of democracy survived to later influence the Roman Empire and in turn to shape modern democratic governments.

## Through ostracism

The *ekklesia*, or assembly, a powerful body of the Athenian democracy, retained one peculiar power: ostracism. An innovation of Cleisthenes probably intended to banish any individual who posed a threat to Athens, ostracism provided for the expulsion of that individual following a vote of the *ekklesia*.

Annually the assembly voted whether or not to conduct an ostracism. If the vote was in favour, the process took place at another meeting held within a few months of the first. Citizens voted by scratching the name of a person that they wanted banished on a shard of pottery called an *ostrakon*. At least 6,000

citizens were required to vote in order for these clay ballots to be tallied.

The individual that got the highest number of votes was required to leave Athens for ten years; however, he did not forfeit his property or lose his rights as an Athenian citizen. Ostracism may have actually been looked upon as an honour. At times an individual became so powerful that he posed a threat to democracy itself. Among those who were ostracised during their lifetime were Themistocles, hero of the wars with Persia, Thucydides, politician and historian, and Alcibiades, statesman, orator and military commander.



This pottery shard, called an *ostrakon*, bears the name of Pericles, once proclaimed the first citizen of Athens





# THE MAKERS OF THE WEST

The Greek leaders who carved out legacies that still echo in the modern world



The Alexander Mosaic, excavated in a Pompeian house, copies lost Greek originals and shows Alexander's defeat of Darius III at the Battle of Issus

## Alexander The Great

### MACEDON

20/21 July 356 - 10/11 June 323 BCE

Of all the great figures in history to illuminate the world, none burned more fiercely than Alexander. He lived for 32 years, reigned as king for 13 and in

that time he utterly reshaped the ancient world. No wonder he continues to fascinate, enthral and appal millennia after his death.

Alexander became king of Macedonia in 336 BCE, aged 20, when his father was assassinated. Philip II had made the Macedonian army a formidable instrument and his son proceeded to wield it to unprecedented effect. Alexander had been tutored as a boy by no less a figure than

the philosopher Aristotle, but he revered Achilles above all other men, keeping the copy of the *Iliad* that Aristotle had notated for him under his pillow when he slept. By 335 BCE (that is, one year into his reign) Alexander had brought all the fractious Greek states under his control, and he set about planning the conquest of the Persian Empire.

The Greeks and the Persians had long been rivals. Indeed, it was in part by defying the might of the Persian Empire that the Greeks had defined themselves as a separate people. Now Alexander, following the plan laid out by his father, aimed to remove the threat from the east once and for all. Starting in 334 BCE, Alexander began a ten-year campaign that would shatter the power of the Persian Empire.

Alexander first conquered Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey) and then forced Darius III, the Persian emperor, into a number of decisive battles, of which the most important were the battles of Issus (5 November 333 BCE) and Gaugamela (1 October 331 BCE). With Darius' death shortly afterwards, murdered by one of his satraps, the Persian Achaemenid Empire ended. Alexander's empire now stretched from the Adriatic Sea in the west to the River Indus in the east. But it was still not enough. Alexander invaded India in 326 BCE, intending to go to the end of the world, but it was too much for his homesick men and they forced Alexander to turn back.

Alexander died in 323 BCE in Babylon, the city he had intended to make his capital, his son yet unborn. In the aftermath of his death his empire was riven by civil wars as his generals battled for the spoils. But the Greek-speaking culture that Alexander had spread so widely endured for a thousand years, creating a far-flung Hellenistic culture that would prove one of the foundations of the modern world. Alexander lived fast and died young, and no one since has surmounted his achievements: undefeated general, founder of cities, breaker of empires.



## Leonidas I

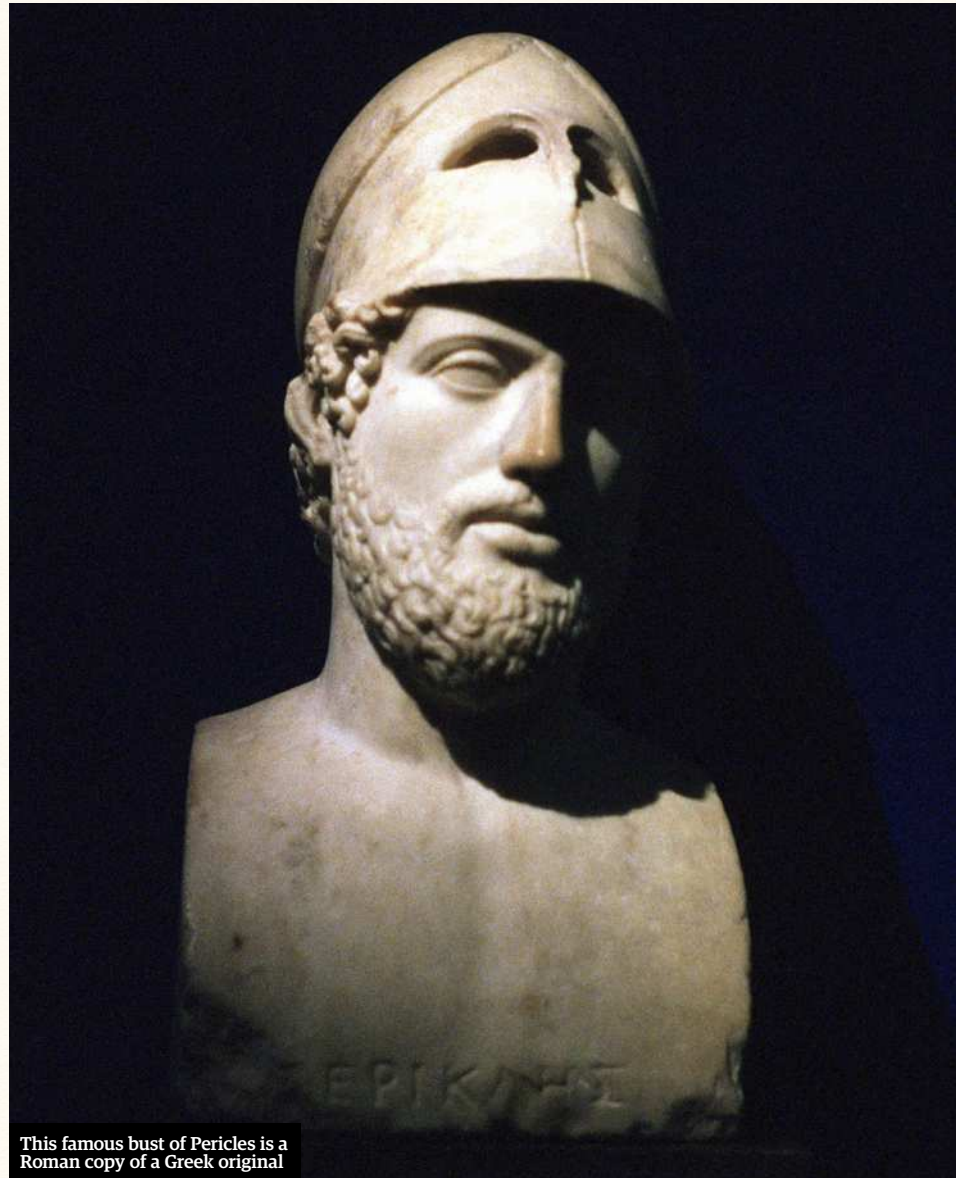
**SPARTA**  
**Died 480 BCE**

After Alexander the Great, Leonidas is probably the best-known Greek leader today thanks to the movie *300* and the meme, "This is Sparta!" The movie is not completely wrong: Leonidas did lead the Greeks in opposing a great Persian invasion led by Xerxes, and at the Battle of Thermopylae in 480 BCE (the exact date is contested) Leonidas and his 300 Spartans did fight to the death against the Persians. There also was a traitor who showed the Persians a route through the mountains to get behind the Spartans, who were holding an almost impregnable position in the narrow pass at Thermopylae.

However, Leonidas went into battle with Greek allies, so that the army originally composed about 7,000 men. They held the pass for two days until Xerxes learned of the mountain pass from Ephialtes, a Greek seeking personal reward for his treachery. Learning that they were being outflanked, Leonidas had most of the men retreat while he, his Spartans, 700 Thespians and the Spartan helots stayed behind to cover the retreat. Knowing that they were going to die, Leonidas led his men from the narrow confines of the pass so that they could kill as many Persians as possible before dying themselves. Leonidas was not last to die but after his death his men fought to the end. In 1939, the archaeologist Spyridon Marinatos discovered many bronze arrowheads on Kolonos Hill, thus identifying the location of the Spartans' last stand.



The Spartans at the Battle of Thermopylae were indeed highly trained physical specimens but they probably wore more armour than in the film



This famous bust of Pericles is a Roman copy of a Greek original

## Pericles

**ATHENS**  
**c.495–429 BCE**

Pericles was the statesman and politician who inaugurated and nourished the Athenian golden age, when the city became indisputably the centre of Greek culture. The fruits of that cultural flowering, including the Acropolis, the plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and Aristophanes, and, after Pericles' death, the foundational work of the philosophers Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, continue to be among the foundations of the world today. But perhaps Pericles' most important contribution was his restructuring of Athenian democracy, where he forced through a change that allowed ordinary citizens to take part in the ekklesia, the assembly of citizens where the

laws and policies of the city were decided. Before Pericles' intervention only wealthy men were able to afford the time necessary to debate and vote in the ekklesia. Pericles introduced the payment of ordinary citizens for their participation in the workings of the state, thus allowing them to take full part in Athenian democracy.

Pericles also manoeuvred the Delian League, the anti-Persian alliance of Greek city-states, into moving its treasury to Athens. When the Peace of Callias was agreed in 449 BCE to end half a century of warfare with the Persian Empire, Pericles used the treasury to fund the construction of the Acropolis. However, in 431 BCE, Pericles was one of the prime instigators of war with Sparta. The ensuing Peloponnesian War would last for 27 years and see Athenian power broken. Pericles never lived to see the war's end, dying in 429 BCE.





## Cleisthenes

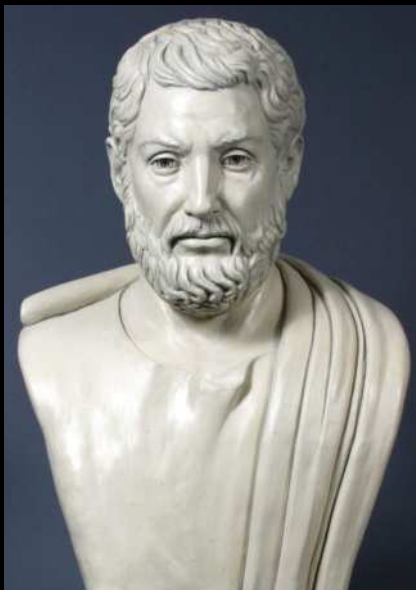
**ATHENS**

**c.570–c.508 BCE**

In 507 BCE, the Athenian statesman Cleisthenes did something that had never been done before: he introduced a body of laws that changed the governance of Athens from a relatively lawless monarchy to a law-based form of democracy.

Hippias had been the king of Athens from 527 to 510 BCE, when he was forced into exile by an alliance of Athenian exiles, including Cleisthenes. The exiles promptly fell to infighting and Cleisthenes had to flee again. But when it seemed that the Athenians had removed one tyrant only to replace him with another, Cleisthenes was called back to the city by the people and assumed control.

However, rather than rule as another tyrant, Cleisthenes set in motion the changes in law that produced demokratia, the rule of the people. Three institutions were responsible for running the new demokratia: the ekklesia, comprising the assembly of Athenian citizens, which passed laws and decided on war or peace; the boule, a 500-strong council from the tribes and districts of Athens responsible for the day-to-day running of government and the proposal of laws to the ekklesia; and courts, to which the juries were elected by the random drawing of lots. After this reform, Cleisthenes disappears from history: no surviving ancient text mentions what happened to him afterward.



There are no surviving contemporary depictions of Cleisthenes: the bust above is a modern interpretation of his appearance



Draco was exiled to the island of Aegina for reasons that are not clear and died there, possibly suffocated by the approbation of his followers

## Draco

**ATHENS**

**Died: 7th century BCE**

Draco established the first written law code in Athens. Before then, Athens had been governed by tradition and feuding. By writing down the law and establishing courts to decide on guilt or innocence, Draco decisively moved Athens towards following a legal tradition. Draco also ensured that the laws were on public display so that anyone who could read might be able to see what the law said. With the previous body of oral law there could be frequent disagreement over what the laws

actually were. Now, the law was written down on wooden tablets and displayed on steles shaped as four-sided pyramids. So far, so good. Unfortunately, the laws Draco instituted were so severe that the word 'draconic', meaning harsh laws or treatment, derives from his name. Steal an apple: death. Steal a cabbage: death. Get into debt: slave to your creditor.

Not much else is known of Draco's life. However, one later story suggests that Draco's popularity proved fatal: to show their support, his supporters showered him with hats, cloaks and shirts while he attended the theatre on the island of Aegina, covering him with so much cloth that Draco suffocated under the pile.



## Ptolemy I Soter

**MACEDON/EGYPT**  
**367-283 BCE**

Alexander was dead. To his men and his generals, it seemed scarcely believable. The star who had blazed through the world more brightly than any other had gone out, dead at only 32. Dying so young, Alexander had no living heir behind whom his men and generals could unite. Looking around at the world they had conquered, it soon became apparent that the heir to Alexander's throne would be the man who could claim it.

At a conference held in Babylon in June 332 BCE, the claimants to Alexander's realm, including his half-brother and representatives of the son still gestating in the womb of his wife, Roxana, agreed a settlement, splitting the empire. Among the generals attending the conference was Ptolemy, one of the seven bodyguards of Alexander. Ptolemy quickly saw that only Alexander was capable of holding his vast empire together. In Babylon, Ptolemy had himself appointed satrap, that is governor, of Egypt, owing nominal allegiance to Alexander's half-brother and son. To cement his rule, Ptolemy captured the mortal remains of Alexander when they were being brought back to Macedon for burial and buried them instead in Alexandria.

In the wars of the Diadochi, the successors to Alexander, Ptolemy played a long game, making use of the geographical isolation of Egypt. The measure of his success was a personal rule in Egypt of 22 years and the founding of a dynasty that would last for over three centuries.



Despite his Macedonian origin, Ptolemy was careful to present himself in traditional guise to his Egyptian subjects, who accepted him as pharaoh



Solon's reform of the Athenian constitution created what was probably the world's first genuine republic

## Solon

**ATHENS**  
**c.630-c.560 BCE**

Sometimes, failure is not the end. Solon was a statesman, lawgiver and poet who lived during what seemed at the time a decline in the Athenian city-state from its archaic ideals. In many Greek states, power had been seized by kings whom the Greeks named tyrants because they ruled without recourse to law but as they saw fit. Athens itself was slipping towards tyranny. To avoid his city slipping further under the rule of a tyrant, Solon instituted a thorough-going reform of Athenian law, starting with the repeal of the harsh legal law code of Draco.

In particular, he repealed the law that allowed creditors to enslave debtors who failed to pay their debts, a power that had been abused by the rich to keep the poor in their place. Solon was elected archon (chief magistrate) in order to effect his reforms, which included broadening the ekklesia,

the assembly of Athenian citizens, to include all the city's citizens, the poor as well as the rich. Solon also lowered the economic requirements that

**"To avoid his city slipping towards tyranny, Solon reformed Athenian law"**

previously had stopped all but the rich from being elected to public office.

However, despite these reforms, Athens still slid towards tyranny, with Pisistratus seizing power as tyrant. Nevertheless, Athens would later return to a fuller form of demokratia under Pericles in the next century.





## Cleopatra

**EGYPT**  
**69-30 BCE**

Cleopatra might not seem an obvious Greek leader, but in fact she was the last ruler of the Ptolemaic Kingdom in Egypt that had been founded three hundred years earlier by Ptolemy I Soter, one of Alexander's generals, following Alexander's death.

Although she was the ruler of Egypt, Cleopatra's mother tongue was still Greek. However, unlike her forbears in the Ptolemaic dynasty, Cleopatra also spoke Egyptian as well as up to seven other languages: her alliances with Julius Caesar and Mark Anthony suggest that Latin was one of those languages. In a male-dominated world, Cleopatra managed to keep the throne first by marrying two of her brothers (an accepted practice in the pharaonic tradition although a cause for scandal in Greece and Rome), then by playing off various

Roman factions against each other, helped by her intimate relations with Julius Caesar and then Mark Anthony. A proud woman, when Octavian (later Augustus Caesar) finally defeated her,

**"Unlike her forbears, she spoke Egyptian and seven other languages"**

Cleopatra told him to his face, "I will not be led in triumph." That is, she would not be paraded in front of Rome at the head of Octavian's victory procession. Instead, she committed suicide, the last of the Greek pharaohs.



Cleopatra, the last pharaoh, continues to fascinate us: here she is portrayed by Claudette Colbert in a 1934 movie

## Philip II

**MACEDON**  
**382-336 BCE**

Any other historical figure with the achievements of Philip II to his name would rank highly in historical and public renown. Unfortunately for Philip's posthumous fame, he had the misfortune to sire a boy, Alexander, whose reign was a supernova of conquest and adventure. In the brightness of his son's name, Philip's has been all but lost. But in truth, Alexander's glory rested firmly upon the solid foundations that his father had laid.

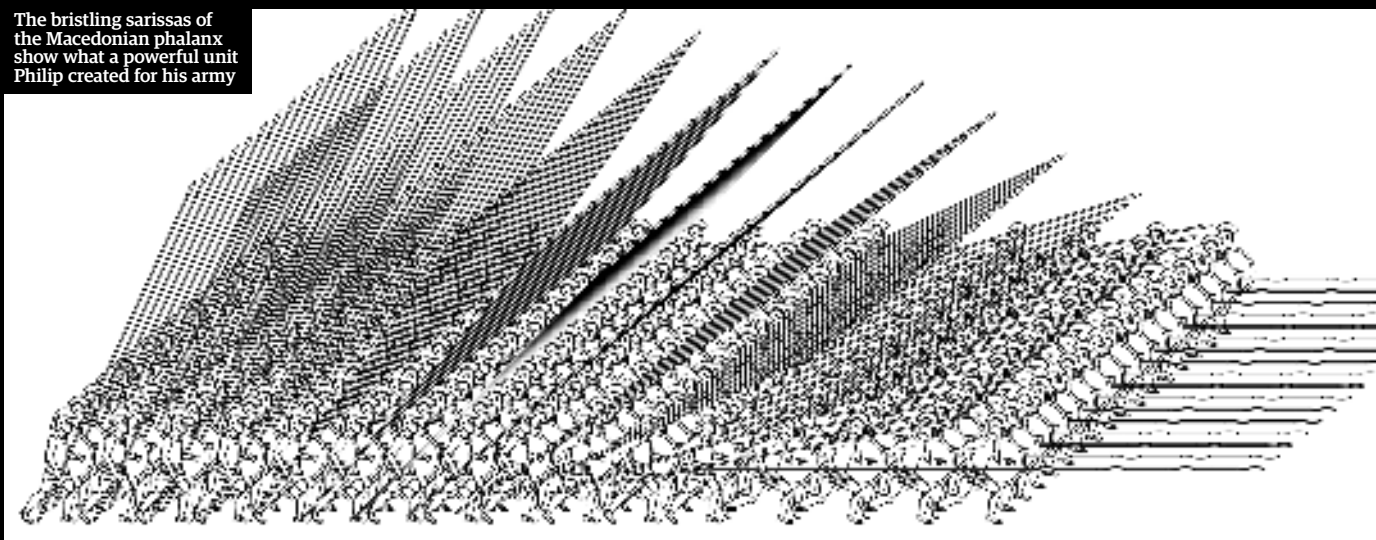
Macedon had always been the poor northern relation of the Greek states, its land too impoverished and its people too provincial to

warrant much attention from Athens or Thebes, Sparta or Corinth. However, Philip changed all that. First, he reformed the Macedonian army, developing the 256-man Macedonian phalanx that bristled like a spiked bulldozer behind five-metre-long sarissas, the pike that was its primary weapon.

With his new phalanx, Philip defeated Athens and Thebes and forced them to join a federation, the League of Corinth, with him as leader and commander-in-chief. Philip intended to use the League to launch his planned invasion of Persia, but his dreams all came to naught when he was assassinated by one of his bodyguards. It was left to his son, Alexander, to put into motion his father's plans, which he did with devastating effect.

Although 3% of Athens' population died in warfare every year, citizens still regarded military service as a privilege

The bristling sarissas of the Macedonian phalanx show what a powerful unit Philip created for his army





## Epaminondas

### THEBES

**Between 410 and 419 - 362 BCE**

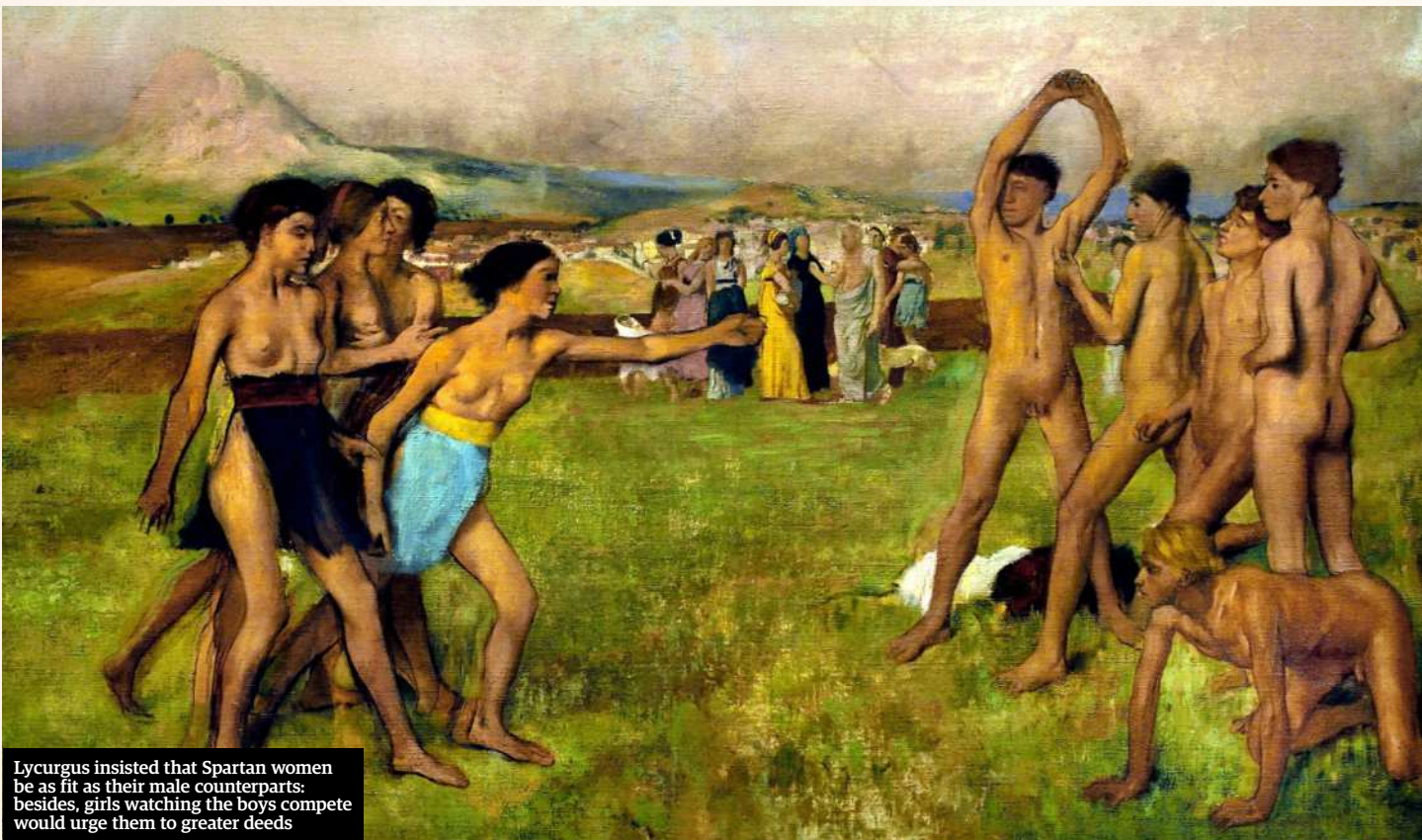
Fortune raises some high after their death, while leaving others largely forgotten. Epaminondas is one of the latter. Following the Peloponnesian War, Sparta had become the dominant power in Greece, but Epaminondas broke the Spartans' hold at the Battle of Leuctra in 371 BCE, pioneering new tactics to overcome the Spartan phalanx. With Spartan dominance broken, Epaminondas led Thebes as it asserted itself as the paramount Greek city-state, leading a series of assaults on Athens and her allies, which

now included a bitter Sparta, seeking revenge for her earlier defeat. Epaminondas died at the culmination of the struggle, at the Battle of Mantinea in 362 BCE. There, the Thebans finally defeated the Athenians and the Spartans. But with Epaminondas dead, the Theban hegemony also went into decline, leaving the Greek city-states as riven by rivalry and hatred as they had been before.

As for Thebes, less than a quarter of a century after its apotheosis it went from being the dominant power in Greece to complete subjugation to Macedon. Greek power was about to be projected abroad, but the man leading that great expansion would be a Macedonian.



Epaminondas was a great battlefield commander who took part in the fighting alongside his men



Lycurgus insisted that Spartan women be as fit as their male counterparts: besides, girls watching the boys compete would urge them to greater deeds

## Lycurgus

### SPARTA

**Died in 730 BCE**

Lycurgus was the legendary founder of many of the institutions that made Sparta stand apart from other Greek city-states. Even the ancient writers who studied him admitted that their information was uncertain, however, he usefully represents the peculiarities of the Spartan constitution - and someone must have been responsible for these peculiarities. Lycurgus probably lived in the 9th

century BCE (although even this is contested) and was a member of the ruling Spartan family. As legislator, Lycurgus was said to be responsible for the Council of Elders, the 28-man assembly, the Gerousia, that, with the two ruling kings, made the ruling assembly of Sparta. The Spartans lived in an early communal society, with land holdings equably held among adult males, in part so that they could devote themselves to mastering the arts of war. For Sparta depended upon its helots, a subjugated slave population that always outnumbered the Spartan citizens. Helots were the

property of the state, not of individual Spartans, and the Spartans lived in perpetual fear of a helot revolt: hence the perpetual military training. Lycurgus also instituted the mess halls where all adult Spartan males ate, sharing the same food and helping to foster a spirit of camaraderie and equality. To educate boys in martial arts they were taken from their mothers at the age of seven and put into regiments of their peers, where they were trained for war. Sparta was a completely militarised society and Lycurgus the man given credit for making it so.

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# THE PHILOSOPHY OF ANCIENT GREECE

In the beginning there were myths. The earliest societies told themselves outlandish stories in order to make sense of the world. Then came the philosophers...

**B**efore the philosophers, people had worked under the assumption that human beings were the centre of all things. The Ancient Greeks had even imagined their gods as essentially people (albeit people with superpowers); always arguing and fighting among themselves, and indulging in interpersonal dramas like a sort of cosmic soap opera.

With the arrival of philosophy, however, this began to change. Philosophers started to explore the idea that human beings were simply a part of a much larger system - and not necessarily its most important ingredient. They asked what our place was in the wider universe; what the world and its constituent parts were made of; and how it might have come into being. They decided made-up stories were no longer sufficient

explanations for the basics of nature, and realised that dedicated study and reasoning were the only way to find the genuine answers.

Their work took them down a bewildering array of blind alleys and dead ends,

but much of what they hit on was surprisingly accurate, paving the way for the generations of thinkers that followed them, and laying the basis of everything we now know, and are still learning about. They didn't always come up with the right answers, but they asked a lot of the right questions, often realising that the questions were more important than the answers.

The pre-Socratic philosophers were those who lived before, or at least not later than, Socrates himself. They were the earliest philosophers to adopt new ways of studying the nature and order of the world, or cosmology, as well as the possible origins of the world, known as cosmogony.

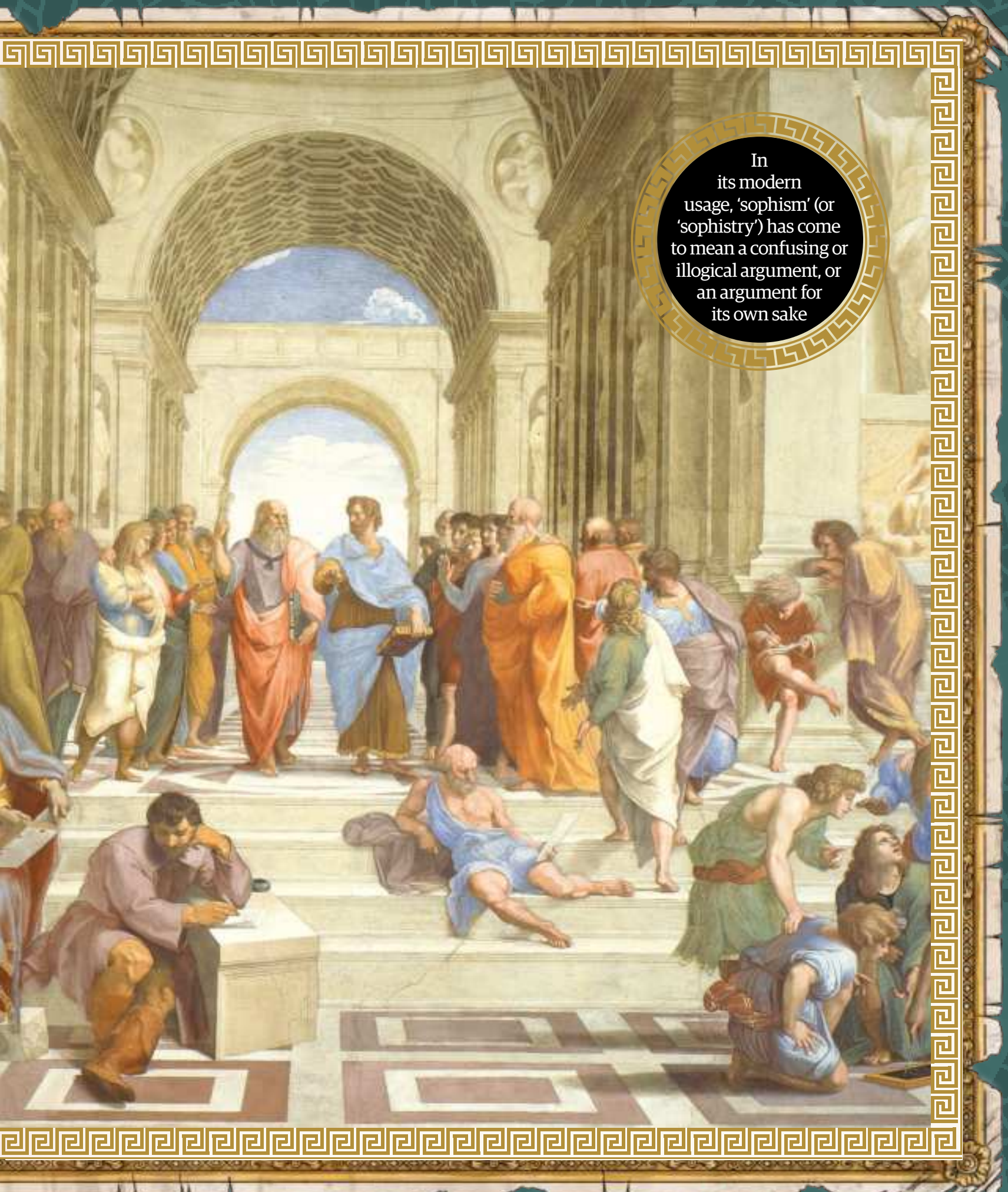
The word 'philosophy' is derived from the Greek 'philo', meaning 'loving', and 'sophis', meaning 'wise'



*The School of Athens, one of the most famous frescoes by Raphael*



In its modern usage, 'sophism' (or 'sophistry') has come to mean a confusing or illogical argument, or an argument for its own sake







## Plato's Republic

Perhaps the most famous of all of Plato's works, the *Republic* outlines his notion of the perfect government. Presented as a series of dialogues between Socrates and various others, it explores the meaning of justice, and discusses a number of existing city-states, before suggesting some hypothetical ones in their place.

For Plato, government is necessary because people aren't all perfect, and some are fundamentally better than others. He divides people into two types: those who are weak-willed and give in to their selfish desires ('akrasia'), versus those who have the integrity and strength of character to adhere to Plato's ideal of goodness ('arête'). He also suggests a social structure of three tiers: the rulers, the soldiers and the tradespeople.

Unsurprisingly, the philosophers are at the top of this social structure, thanks to their abundance of arête, and their understanding of ideas and forms. Soldiers are similarly virtuous, but are fonder of action rather than deep thought. And tradespeople are the everyday dogsbodies who want to own things and sleep with people.

Plato named his ideal city Kallipolis, and he believed it represented a new third way between democracy and tyranny, both of which rewarded selfishness. Philosophers, he was sure, would rule for the many and not the few.



A manuscript page from a Latin edition of Plato's *Republic* from 1401



Neoplatonic ideas influenced Saint Augustine of Hippo (354-430 CE)

The Milesian school is so named because its ideas stem from the philosophers of the town of Miletus. They pursued the idea that all things have their basis in one single substance – although they had rather different ideas about what that substance might be. For Thales, the root of reality was water.

The Ephesian school went with Heraclitus's conclusion that the quintessential element was fire, or at least something like it. According to this theory, everything is always 'burning', each 'form' constantly reacting with its opposite, keeping the universe in a permanent state of flux.

The Eleatic school took its direction from Parmenides of Elea, whose attention focused on the act of thinking itself. He reasoned that there must be a disconnection between what actually, physically is and always has been, and our perception of that reality. Change is an illusion. Everything that exists must always have existed, because non-existence doesn't exist!

The Pluralist school grappled with that complicated notion, attempting to reconcile it with observable events like death and destruction. Empedocles agreed that non-existence was impossible, but argued that materials could be infinitely combined and recycled (this included the idea of reincarnation, which Pythagoras would adopt). Anaxagoras suggested that everything has indeed always existed, but as an infinite number of unimaginably small units.

Anaxagoras's idea in turn informed the Atomist school, which taught that tiny atoms were the hidden ingredients of all objects, and possibly even of metaphysical concepts like the soul.

Pythagoras, who gave his name to Pythagoreanism, decided instead that numbers were the bedrock of reality, because everything can be counted. From his discovery that the strings of a harp make harmonies with each other according to ratios of their length, he extrapolated that the



Sir Francis Bacon (1561-1626) at one time considered himself an Atomist

stars had a similar relationship between numbers and harmony, making "the music of the spheres" as they moved.

But it wasn't all cosmological. The Sophists were more concerned with human beings than with esoteric arguments about the basis of reality. "Man is the measure of all things," as Protagoras put it. There were no one-size-fits-all rules for human behaviour. People should act socially and politically as individuals in the way that most benefitted themselves and their fellows.

All of the above were fundamental steps towards the classical philosophy of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. Socrates is widely credited with bringing philosophy into the mainstream conversation of the Athens of his time. Plato followed in his footsteps, and was responsible for disseminating many of Socrates' supposed ideas (we only have Plato's word that his quoting of Socrates is accurate), while igniting debates of his own in the form of his famous dialogues. And Aristotle was a student at Plato's Academy, who broke away from his teacher and gave the greatest weight yet to deriving knowledge from empirical observations rather than high-minded theorising.

What followed was the era of Hellenistic philosophy, which lasted until the beginnings of the Roman Empire in the early 30s BCE. The word 'Hellenistic' itself is derived from 'Hellas', meaning Greece. Like the Sophists, they were often more concerned with day-to-day life than the substance of the universe. Among the many and varied Hellenistic schools of thought, these were some of the most significant.

Stoicism, as popularised by Zeno of Citium in the 3rd century BCE, involves limiting one's desires and accepting what life throws at you. The Stoics believed that emotional reactions result in errors of judgement, and are pointless because natural events cannot be controlled.



Skepticism, in the version espoused by Pyrrho of Elis, is about suspension of judgement. We can't trust our senses, and we can never be certain of the truth of anything. We can only have ideas - and ideas can always be argued with. This is an offshoot of Sophism, a tenet of which is that people are often mistaken. What you think is true may not be true at all. You might only be dreaming that you're reading this bookazine!

Adherents to the idea of Cynicism - such as Diogenes and Antisthenes - rejected social and material conventions as having no value. They believed that mental clarity could only be achieved by throwing off the trappings of society. Diogenes said that "bad people obey their lusts as servants obey their masters".

Epicureanism (named after its progenitor, Epicurus) has become associated with seeking pleasure, but was actually about avoiding pain, which isn't necessarily the same thing. Somewhat akin to Stoicism, the Epicureans believed that facing life with the correct attitude was important for achieving intellectual peace.

Superstitious beliefs were to be avoided as the causes of unnecessary worry; if there are gods, Epicurus taught, they don't care what we do.

Eclecticism suggested that several different systems of philosophy only deviated from one another on minor points, and tried to find the commonalities rather than insist on the differences. Antiochus of Ascalon was one of its earliest proponents. He highlighted the contradictions in the arguments of the Skeptics, pointing out that

you can't assert that nothing can be asserted, or prove that nothing can be proved. There may be worth in many schools of thought.

And finally there was Neoplatonism. This is more a historical term than a philosophical school, and the word was not actually coined until the 19th century CE. It's generally traced back to the Egyptian philosopher Plotinus, whose original intention seems simply to have been to preserve and continue the teachings of Plato and Aristotle. Gradually, however, elements of Persian and Indian philosophy were mixed in, and it became more of a religious philosophy based around the idea of 'the One' being from which the rest of the universe emanates.

Afterwards, from the early days of the Roman Empire and all through the Middle Ages and beyond, the idea of a single god began to take hold, drastically affecting the direction that philosophy took.

It was now competing with religion, and thinkers turned their attentions to reconciling reason with faith.

Neoplatonism was a reasonably

good fit for this new era. Its idea

that evil stems from human sin and simply the absence of good, for example, was an early influence in the work of the early Christian theologian Augustine of Hippo in the mid 4th century CE. It proved equally significant for the Italian theologian Saint Bonaventure almost 1,000 years later, and during the subsequent Italian Renaissance. Neoplatonism was able to provide a bridge between philosophy and religion for centuries.

Anaximander thought the underpinning of the universe was a made-up substance, 'apeiron', the basis of earth, air, fire and water

But Atomism also saw an explosion of revived interest in the 16th and 17th centuries, informing the pioneering scientific work of Copernicus and Galileo, and the philosophical investigations of Sir Francis Bacon and Thomas Hobbes. In fact, while some are now obscure, practically all of the Ancient Greek philosophies retain some interest and relevance to this day. They may be ancient, but many centuries on, they can still teach us new ways of thinking.

## Platonic idealism

For Plato, ideas were real - the 'forms' that give shape to the world around us. These forms were the perfect examples of things that exist in the world, with the versions we encounter on an everyday basis merely imperfect copies. You might have in your head, for example, a perfect image of a magnificent oak tree. That is the form, whereas the scraggly oaks in your local park are the reality. Another example might be a row of biscuits in a bakery. The biscuits themselves are the reality, but the biscuit cutter they came from is the form.

Plato believed that everyone is born with an innate understanding of the world of forms, but it gets obscured as we grow older. The fact that we can figure out these forms through logical deduction was, according to Plato, 'remembering' things we have never experienced, and therefore proof of an immortal soul.

The task of the philosopher then, is to progress towards the world of forms, rather than that of imperfect reality; to identify ideas, and bring one's life and thoughts into accordance with them. It's a big ask, since perfection is hard to achieve. But the destination is less important than the journey.



Heraclitus thought that everything was different and the same simultaneously, like a river, which stays the same river even though its flowing water constantly changes



Kerameikos was an important burial place in ancient Athens





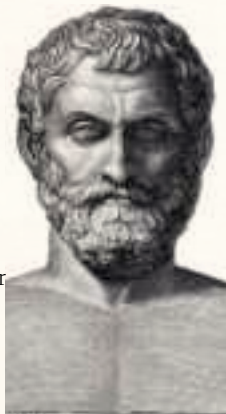
# ANCIENT GREEK PHILOSOPHERS

Ten great minds whose works shaped the development of Western thinking

## Thales of Miletus

**C.625-C.547 BCE**

Thales of Miletus is often considered to be the first philosopher and the father of Western philosophy, who founded the pre-Socratic Ionian school. At the time, the Greeks explained the origin of the world and natural events through myths and the supernatural, but Thales sought naturalistic explanations. According to Aristotle, Thales believed that water was the beginning of all things and that the Earth was a flat disk floating on an ocean. The historian Herodotus claimed that Thales, a polymath, predicted the solar eclipse that occurred on 28 May 585 BCE, which is now known as the Eclipse of Thales.



## Parmenides of Elea

**C.515-C.450 BCE**

Another pre-Socratic Greek philosopher, Parmenides was the founder of the Eleatic school in southern Italy. He is credited as the father of metaphysics, believing that reality is a single unchanging and universal entity.

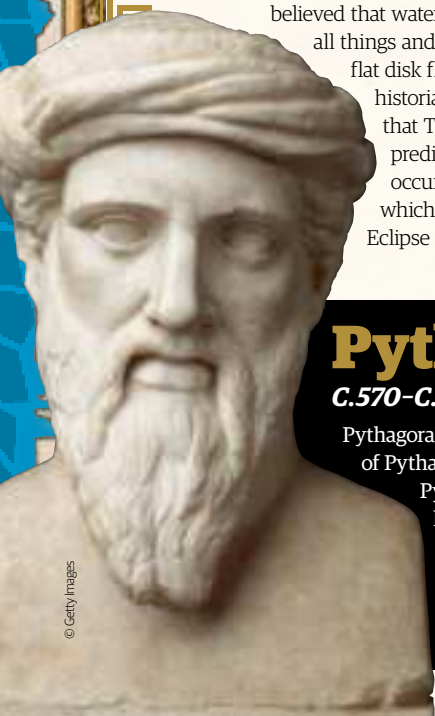
His teachings have been reconstructed from his only known piece of work, a poem entitled *On Nature*. However, it has only survived in fragments and so there is a lot of debate on how to interpret Parmenides' poem and his teachings correctly.



## Pythagoras

**C.570-C.490 BCE**

Pythagoras is one of the most famous Ancient Greek philosophers. He was the founder of Pythagoreanism, a school of philosophy built around the teachings and beliefs of Pythagoras and his followers. Unfortunately, he did not write anything down himself, so we must rely on second-hand accounts about him - although we do know that he believed in the transmigration of the soul. Despite his fame today, Pythagoras remains a controversial figure of philosophy whose life, teachings and school are shrouded in mystery and mythology.



## Hypatia C.355-415 CE

Hypatia was a Neoplatonist philosopher who was influenced by the teachings of Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus. She delivered lectures both in her home and in public lecture halls in Alexandria in modern-day Egypt, with people travelling from all over the eastern Mediterranean to hear her speak. Caught up in the middle of a political feud, Hypatia was killed by a bloodthirsty mob, who attacked her as she travelled home. As a result of her horrific death, Hypatia is remembered as a martyr for philosophy.



## Aristotle

**384–322 BCE**

Aristotle, undoubtedly one of the greatest thinkers in the history of human civilisation, shaped centuries of philosophy through his profound teachings. He studied under Plato at the Academy in Athens for two decades before he was hired as tutor for Alexander the Great. Aristotle then established his own school, the Lyceum, where he likely produced 200 works, although unfortunately only a few of them survive today. He was the founder of the science of logic and some of his most important and influential writings, based on his lecture notes, include *Metaphysics*, *Poetics*, *Rhetoric*, *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics*. Aristotle's work notably influenced the development of Islamic philosophy as well as Christian theology.



## Aspasia of Miletus

**C.470–C.400 BCE**

Aspasia was a scholar and philosopher who is perhaps best remembered as the mistress and companion of the statesman Pericles. She was known for her intellectual ability, moving in both academic and philosophical circles, and she appears in the writings of numerous Greek philosophers including Plato and Xenophon. Unfortunately none of her work survives but Socrates, in his own writings, claimed that she instructed both him and Pericles in rhetoric - a testament to her influence.



## Epicurus

**341–C.271 BCE**

Epicurus was the founder of Epicureanism, a school of philosophy that advocated a restrained form of hedonism. He believed that the greatest good was the absence of physical pain and freedom from fear, which could be achieved through seeking moderate pleasure. However, Epicurus counselled against overindulgence, lust and anger, advising that pleasure could be obtained through friendship, knowledge and living a virtuous life. His school, known as The Garden, in Athens, became a community of his followers, including women.



## Pyrrho of Elis

**C.365–C.275 BCE**

Widely regarded as the first Greek skeptic philosopher, Pyrrho believed nothing can be truly known because every statement can be reasonably contradicted. He is often described as the founder, or at least the inspiration, for Pyrrhonism, one of the two major schools of philosophical skepticism. As Pyrrho did not leave any written work of his own, most of our information about him has been passed on to us by his student, Timon.



## Hipparchia of Maroneia

**C.350–C.280 BCE**

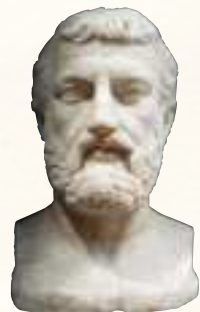
Hipparchia was one of the few female philosophers in Ancient Greece. She was a Cynic philosopher like her brother, Metrokles, and her husband, Crates. With Crates, Hipparchia lived a Cynic lifestyle of poverty and together they embodied Cynic principles such as foregoing materialism and embracing self-sufficiency, believing this would place them on the path to virtue. It is thought that Hipparchia and Crates influenced their pupil, Zeno of Citium, who was the founder of Stoicism.



## Zeno of Citium

**C.334–C.262 BCE**

As the founder of the Stoic school of philosophy, Zeno attended the lectures of several philosophers before developing his own philosophy. He was a pupil of Crates the Cynic and his wife, Hipparchia, who influenced his belief that men should aim for self-sufficiency. Unlike Epicurus' philosophy, which advocated seeking pleasure, Zeno's philosophy argued that men should recognise all things were without lasting value and that virtue was the only good. For Zeno, natural law was the key principle of the universe and men should live in accordance with reason. Stoicism went on to become the dominant philosophy in the Roman period.







# THE GREEKS AND THEIR RELIGION

Ancient Greek religion was diverse, contradictory, and endlessly inventive, much like the Greeks themselves

**G**reek religion had no formal set of beliefs or practices to which all had to conform or accept. The Greeks had their mythological stories, many of which were shared all over their country, but they did not develop a rigorous system of beliefs about them. The Greeks, for example, had no one sacred text, such as the Bible, at the core of their religion. Often Greek myths differed from place to place, as well as the particular stories told about the gods and heroes.

Sometimes these stories were wildly contradictory of others. Several gods had clearly overlapping areas of authority that could not be reconciled. Greek mythology was the product of centuries of unregulated storytelling by some of history's most creative and innovative people. Their myths explained the origins of the gods, the nature of the world in which the Greeks lived, and what they believed to be their history. If their mythology might appear to be lacking coherence at times, that is a modern judgement that would have puzzled the Greeks themselves.

Furthermore, unlike the case in modern times, the Ancient Greeks lacked a concept of a clear division between the realm of religion and that of non-religious life. For them, it was a seamless

whole, with the gods, of which there were many, demanding and receiving the worship and sacrifice delivered by both the state and by private individuals regularly.

In fact, the Greeks had no specific word for 'religion' as we might understand it. Religion was simply part of their everyday life. Rituals were conducted at all important public and private events and a deity was routinely

consulted before any major undertaking. A fortunate result in one's life was often responded to with a votive offering to a god, vows of thanks, or some other public form of recognition of the particular deity to whom success was owed.

There were 12 major gods and goddesses of the Greeks. These were the Olympians, so named because they reside atop Mount Olympus.

Zeus was the lord and master of them all. Hera, his wife (and sister) was his queen. With him also was Aphrodite, goddess of love, bright Apollo, and his virgin sister Artemis the Huntress. Demeter, goddess of growing things, was there also. Athena, the goddess of wisdom and patroness of heroes, was there. Hephaestus too was an Olympian. He was the lame but matchless smith of the gods. Hermes was Zeus' fleet-footed messenger. Brutal Ares was the lord of war, while

Families believed that they might be able to find one another in the afterlife if the members were buried close to one another







*Alexander Consulting the  
Oracle of Apollo (painting by  
Louis Jean François Lagrenée)*





The city of Delphi was the home of Apollo's oracle

## The Olympic Games

One festival that was attended by Greeks of all the cities was the Olympia in honour of Zeus Olympios (of Mount Olympus). First recorded as taking place in 776 BCE at Olympia, the Olympic Games were held every four years and only Greeks were allowed to attend them. The games initially involved just one event, a foot race, but over time, several other competitions were added to the programme.

Though it was an athletic competition, the religious nature of the festival was always present. The Olympia began with sacrifices and prayers offered to Zeus. Next, all of the competitors swore an oath before Zeus' altar and statue. Breaking this oath might result in a stiff fine or disqualification. There were then two further public sacrifices, with one conducted on the day of the full moon and the other on the last day of the festival.

While the games were being held, all of the states of Greece were bound to observe an armistice. This sacred truce was implemented so that competitors and others travelling to watch the games could attend them without fear of harm befalling them.



Only Greeks were allowed to compete in the games at Olympia



One of the main sources of Greek ideas about the gods was the *Iliad*, Homer's epic poem about the Trojan War

Poseidon was the god of the sea and its creatures. Rounding out the Olympian pantheon was Dionysus, the god of wine and revelry.

In addition to the mighty Olympians, the Greeks had hundreds of other lesser deities. Having so many gods of their own meant they were relatively open-minded when it came to the gods of non-Greeks. They readily identified or equated foreign gods with similar ones of their own pantheon. They had no cause to deny the existence of anyone else's gods. The easy-going attitude toward the deities of foreign peoples did not mean the Greeks were unserious about religion. Religious practices were taken very seriously. Treaties between city-states were solemnised by oaths sworn by the gods as well as sacrifices. Breaking such a treaty might bring about a terrible disaster.

The gods had their own priests and priestesses who oversaw the rites honouring the gods and tended their temples, shrines and sanctuaries. They did not involve themselves with the spiritual concerns of the worshippers. There was little in the way of formal doctrine for priests to know or follow. There were several features to worship that all Greeks had in common.

“There were 12 major gods and goddesses of the Greeks. These were the Olympians”

### PRAYING

Prayers were the usual means by which people communicated with the gods. The primary parts of a prayer were the invocation, in which the person called upon the deity using his name, title and abode; the argument, in which the supplicant gave reasons to the god as to why he should help, which might include a recitation of good deeds performed by the mortal or making a note that the god was known for his helpfulness; and the prayer itself, which was a request for some kind of divine aid. Many kinds of relief might be sought, such as an end to sickness or drought.

### PURIFICATION

The cleansing of the community from pollution (or *miasma*) was of enormous importance to the Greeks. Private individuals might be purified by washing. Often purification was undertaken before some important action or perhaps as required by the calendar. The Athenian Assembly underwent ritual purification before the beginning of a meeting by having a sacrificed piglet carried around the members. Sometimes a community might undergo a mass purification driving out human scapegoats.

Ritual purification could be effected by washing or sprinkling. Fumigation was also used, along with seawater and water drawn from a sacred spring. Sacrifices would also suffice for purification, with the blood of the victim used to wash away the pollution of an unclean person.

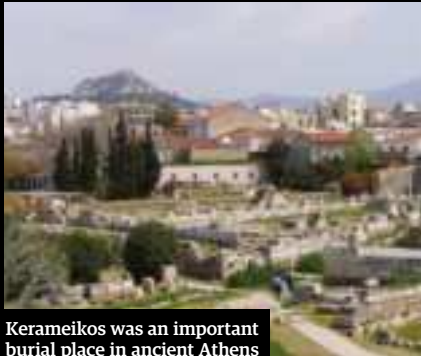
### SACRIFICES

Sacrifices were of vast importance in Greek worship. Both animals and vegetables were seen as appropriate sacrifices to the gods. With animals, the victim was brought to the altar of a god in a procession where it was sprinkled with water. These drops caused the animal to nod, which to the Greek mind was its acceptance of its sacrifice. Hair was then cut from the animal and a prayer was said to indicate what the sacrificer wished for in return for the sacrifice.

The animal was dispatched via a cut to the throat and its meat divided out into portions. The first was for the god. The second, the entrails, were roasted and eaten by the participants of the



## Crossing over



Kerameikos was an important burial place in ancient Athens

The Greeks believed that the dead needed help in crossing the boundary between the world of the living and Hades, the gloomy realm of the dead. Those left behind sought to bury the dead as quickly as they could, or else the unburied dead would be condemned to roam for many years along the banks of the Styx, the river that marked the boundary between them and the underworld.

The retrieval of the bodies of the dead and their proper burial was of tremendous importance to the living. In 405 BCE, ten Athenian admirals won a great naval victory at Arginusae but failed to collect the corpses of their slain sailors on account of a storm that came up suddenly. On their return to Athens they were put on trial for dereliction of duty despite having won the battle. Several of the admirals were executed.

Within days of death, the body was to be buried, with the corpse being carried to the place of burial. Both bodily burial and cremation were available, with cremation thought to be more prestigious. The ashes of the dead were placed in an urn which was itself then buried.

Most Athenian burials took place on the roads leading out of the city. Burials inside the city were not allowed because of a wish to avoid pollution by the dead. After interment, the graves were not forgotten, but were tended to regularly by the surviving relatives, especially by the women of the family.



The oracle of Apollo at Delphi, as imagined by Michelangelo

sacrifice. The rest of the meat was then boiled and given out to those present at the ritual.

### FESTIVALS

Festivals were important parts of Greek public religion. Hundreds of public religious festivals were held every year by the various communities of Ancient Greece. About one in every three days of the year was devoted to a festival of one kind or another. Though particular practices and the deities most prominently honoured might vary from city to city, religion was a central element that served to distinguish Greeks from foreigners.

The basic features of a festival were the procession, the sacrifice and the feast. Outside of these, local practices could differ widely. Most festivals owed their origins to agricultural rituals carried out to ensure a bountiful harvest. They were typically held seasonally, with the Thesmophoria, held in honour of Demeter, mostly taking place in the autumn.

Another important festival was the Great Dionysia held annually in Athens. Athens was particularly fond of festivals, and was said to have held twice as many as any other city-state in Greece. Plays formed an important part of the Dionysia, with four days devoted to such presentations, three for tragedies and the fourth and last was reserved for comedies.

### ORACLES

As might be imagined, with sickness and death ever-present in ancient times, the Greeks were

often very anxious about the future. The reasonable desire for reassurance led many to seek out advice from the gods, which was obtained through their oracles. There were ten such oracles who foretold the future, after a fashion, for mortal men. Foremost among these was the oracle of Delphi, where the Pythia, a priestess of Apollo, delivered her pronouncements on behalf of the god. In words attributed to Apollo himself, the very purpose of the construction of his temple there was so that he could give 'unfailing advice through

prophetic responses' in it. Another famous oracular shrine was that of Zeus found at Dodona in Epirus. Questions put to the

god's oracle were often very personal, such as whether the supplicant should get married or make a voyage across the sea. The response was usually simply yes or no.

Sometimes the answers could be more complicated and have major consequences.

Right before the mighty Persians invaded Greece for a second time in 480 BCE, the Athenians consulted the oracle at Delphi. The Athenians knew that their situation was dire, and some were even considering packing up and leaving for safety in Italy. The historian Herodotus tells us that the priestess Aristonice told them that "only the wooden wall shall not fall". This baffling response was open to many interpretations, but Themistocles, the leading man at Athens, cleverly interpreted this to mean that they would have to rely on their navy, the ships themselves being made of wood, to fend off the Persians. The Athenians would go on to lead the combined Greek fleet to a great naval victory at Salamis soon afterward.

Apollo's oracle at Delphi continued to offer pronouncements until the shrine was destroyed by the invading Heruli in 267 CE



The Parthenon was the great temple of Athena in Athens





## Zeus

### LORD OF OLYMPUS

Mighty Zeus was the lord and king of the Olympian gods, and father of many gods and heroes. His domain was the sky and he was master of the weather. His animal was the eagle, the greatest of all birds. Zeus was the most powerful of all the gods - perhaps even stronger than all of them put together - yet he was not invincible, and he could not defy the wishes of his divine brethren with impunity.

Zeus oversaw oaths and hospitality, while his divine radiance was enough to burn mere mortals to ashes. He also had a roving eye and would have many amorous trysts with nymphs and other women who were not his wife. Through Danaë he would father the hero Perseus, slayer of serpent-crowned Medusa; he also fathered Herakles, destined to become a demigod on Olympus, and Helen, the most beautiful woman of all. Zeus had many other dalliances, and Hera, his wife, would seek vengeance for her humiliation by afflicting the women Zeus seduced.

## Hermes

### MESSENGER OF THE GODS

Son of Zeus by the nymph Maia, Hermes was the god of messengers and travellers. He acted to guide others to their destinations. In the *Iliad*, he brings King Priam of Troy through the Greek lines to meet with Achilles to recover the body of his slain son, Hector. When Hera, Athena and Aphrodite needed to find their way to Mount Ida to participate in the judgment of Paris, it was Hermes who led them to their destination. It was also Hermes who conducted Persephone out of the Underworld and back to Demeter in the world of the living.



# THE TWELVE OLYMPIANS

The gods of Olympus were a fractious family of glorious, majestic, scheming and treacherous deities

## Poseidon

### LORD OF THE SEA

Poseidon was the full brother of Zeus and son of Cronus. When the three brothers, Zeus, Poseidon and Hades, overthrew their father, Poseidon took the sea as his realm. Like the sea, Poseidon could be placid one moment and raging the next, and his weapon and symbol of authority was the three-pronged trident. The vengeful Poseidon ensured that the Greek hero Odysseus would be delayed for years in returning to his home island of Ithaca for his blinding of the sea god's son, the Cyclops. He was responsible for earthquakes, and was known as Earth-shaker among the Greeks.



## Dionysus

### GOD OF WINE AND REVELRY

Dionysus was the god of wine. The son of Zeus by mortal Semele, worship of him was among the most startling of all the Greek gods. Women figured prominently in his cult. The leaders, known as maenads, partook in ecstatic, sometimes violent, rituals in which they dancing frenzily and tore wild animals to pieces. Greek women would attend his ceremonies by going into the hills to drink themselves to stupefaction in the Bacchanalia.



## Athena

### GODDESS OF WISDOM AND WAR

Athena, goddess of wisdom, was the daughter of Zeus by the goddess Metis. She was the deity of civilisation, as well as a patroness of many Greek heroes. In the *Iliad*, we find her siding with the Greeks against the Trojans during their ten-year war in which she directly intervened to help them. In the *Odyssey*, she helps another favourite, Odysseus, make his way from Troy to Ithaca.

Athena was also the patron deity of Athens, the greatest of all Greek cities. In the 5th century BCE, the Athenians would build the Parthenon, the most magnificent of all temples, dedicated to her.

The goddess was noble in aspect and demeanour, but could be harsh to those who displeased her. Tiresias had the misfortune to espy her while she bathed, and she struck him blind for his transgression against the gods.







## Hera QUEEN OF THE GODS

Glorious Hera was both the wife and sister of Zeus, and queen of the gods. Her purview was marriage and motherhood, but despite her position as wife to Zeus, she was hardly the happiest of spouses. Her husband's philandering ways made her extremely jealous and she had a particular hatred for Heracles, Zeus's son by the mortal woman Alcmena. Hera constantly sought to avenge her humiliation by Zeus by afflicting Heracles, who had really done her no harm. She despatched two snakes to kill the boy when he was just an infant, but she found her murderous plan thwarted when little Heracles killed them both. She later made him go mad, and while he was insane, he killed his wife and children.

Hera could be murderously jealous of Zeus's lovers themselves, too. She persuaded Semele, the mother of the god Dionysus, to insist that Zeus appear to her in his full divine splendour. Reluctantly, he did so, and the poor woman was reduced to ash by his overpowering radiance.



## Demeter THE GODDESS OF GROWING THINGS

The goddess of the Earth, motherhood, fertility and the harvest was known as Demeter. As the ultimate source of the grain that the Greeks used to make their bread, she was enormously important to them.

Her main festival was the Thesmophoria, held every autumn to ensure a good harvest.

Demeter features prominently in the explanation for the seasons, and thus the annual cycles of birth, life, death and rebirth seen in the natural world. The story begins when Hades, lord of the Underworld kingdom that also bore his name, stole the goddess' beloved daughter, Persephone.



## Apollo GOD OF MUSIC, HEALING AND PROPHECY

Handsome Apollo had his two main cult centres in Greece at Delphi and on the island of Delos. Delphi was home to his chief oracle and priestess, the Pythia, also known as the oracle of Delphi. There at his shrine she would receive petitioners seeking to question her about the future.

The weapon of Apollo was the bow. When his priest Chryses was mistreated by the Greeks at Troy, he struck down many of them with plague-carrying arrows. He was also said to pull the Sun behind him in his airborne chariot, and was sometimes given the name Phoebus, meaning 'bright'.



## Hephaestus THE SMITH OF OLYMPUS

Hephaestus was the great smith of the pantheon. Unlike the other deities, who were physically perfect, Hephaestus was lame, and was thus the epitome of the outsider among the gods. He was cruelly mocked by the other deities for his deformity, though they admired the products of his hands as he was the patron of all who worked with metal. Learning that his faithless wife Aphrodite was making love to Ares, he made a magic net that fell upon them while they were abed. Thus trapped, he summoned the other Olympians to view and mock the adulterous pair.

## Aphrodite GODDESS OF LOVE

The goddess of love and beauty, Aphrodite was born out of the sea foam when Cronus tossed the severed genitals of Uranus into the waves, though another myth gives her a less gruesome birth and makes her the daughter of Zeus and the goddess Dione. Her major cult centre was Cyprus, where she is said to have been born. Oddly, the loveliest of goddesses was married to the ugliest of gods, Hephaestus the lame smith of Olympus. She was not faithful to him, and was once caught naked in bed with Ares by a magic net fashioned by her cuckolded and outraged husband.

Aphrodite helped start of the Trojan War. When she, Hera and Athena each sought to claim the title of most beautiful, they had Paris, the son of the king of Troy, choose between them. Hera offered him power, Athena promised victory, but Aphrodite told him that she would make the most beautiful woman in the world his own.

## Artemis VIRGIN GODDESS OF THE HUNT

Artemis was the twin sister of Apollo and daughter of Zeus by Leto. She was a virgin huntress - often depicted carrying a bow and arrows - and also the patroness of women in childbirth. Being the goddess of virginity and a protector of young girls, she fiercely guarded her own modesty. When the unlucky hunter Actaeon stumbled upon her while she was bathing in a sacred spring, she turned him into a stag for his transgression. His own hounds promptly tore him limb from limb.



## Ares GOD OF WAR

War in all its fearsome brutality was represented by Ares. He was the son of Zeus by his queen, Hera, but was little liked by his father and the other gods. The Greeks themselves had little love for the deity on account of the horrors that war brought with it.

One goddess that did favour Ares, though, was Aphrodite, the love goddess, with whom he fathered four children, but she was at the time already married to Hephaestus. Two of these children were Phobos (Fear) and Deimos (Terror), each representing concepts closely associated with war.







# GREEK TEMPLES

Inside these multi-use architectural marvels

**T**he temple acted as a cosmic generator. It was regarded as a dwelling designed for the gods and was also seen as a reception area for prayer, magical petition and divination.

It also became a political symbol that emphasised the might and power of the state through ancient architectural achievement. The temple, now the most famous symbol of ancient Greece, was also functional - it housed important official offices as well as acting as a storage centre and a treasury.



The Doric temple of Segesta

## The Parthenon



**Location:**  
Athenian Acropolis, Greece  
**Length of construction:**  
447-438 BCE  
**Designer:** Phidias  
**Type of building/purpose:**  
Temple and treasury  
**Type of architecture:**  
Classical - Doric  
**Cost of construction:**  
In modern terms, it is estimated that the Parthenon cost over £3 million  
**Architects:**  
Ictinos and Callicrates  
**Area coverage:** 69.5m x 30.9m

## Doric architecture

The temple was entered from a ceremonial ramp, allowing the individual to approach the portico. Once inside, you faced a narrow corridor decorated with pillars. Although the temple was annexed by official offices and storerooms, it was designed so that the

individual had a sense that he or she was entering a holy space - with the narrowing of the corridor you were gradually drawn inwards as if about to experience the sacred presence of the gods. At the heart of the temple there was the cella, the home of the cult statue.

### Metopes and triglyphs

Metopes are individual sections of sculpted stone that show figures of war. Triglyphs may represent the wooden beam of a primitive hut.

### Column flutes

The number of flutes on each column changed with each architectural style.

### Columns

Valued for their beautiful architectural features, columns were also seen as pillars of the sky.

### Stereobate or foundation blocks

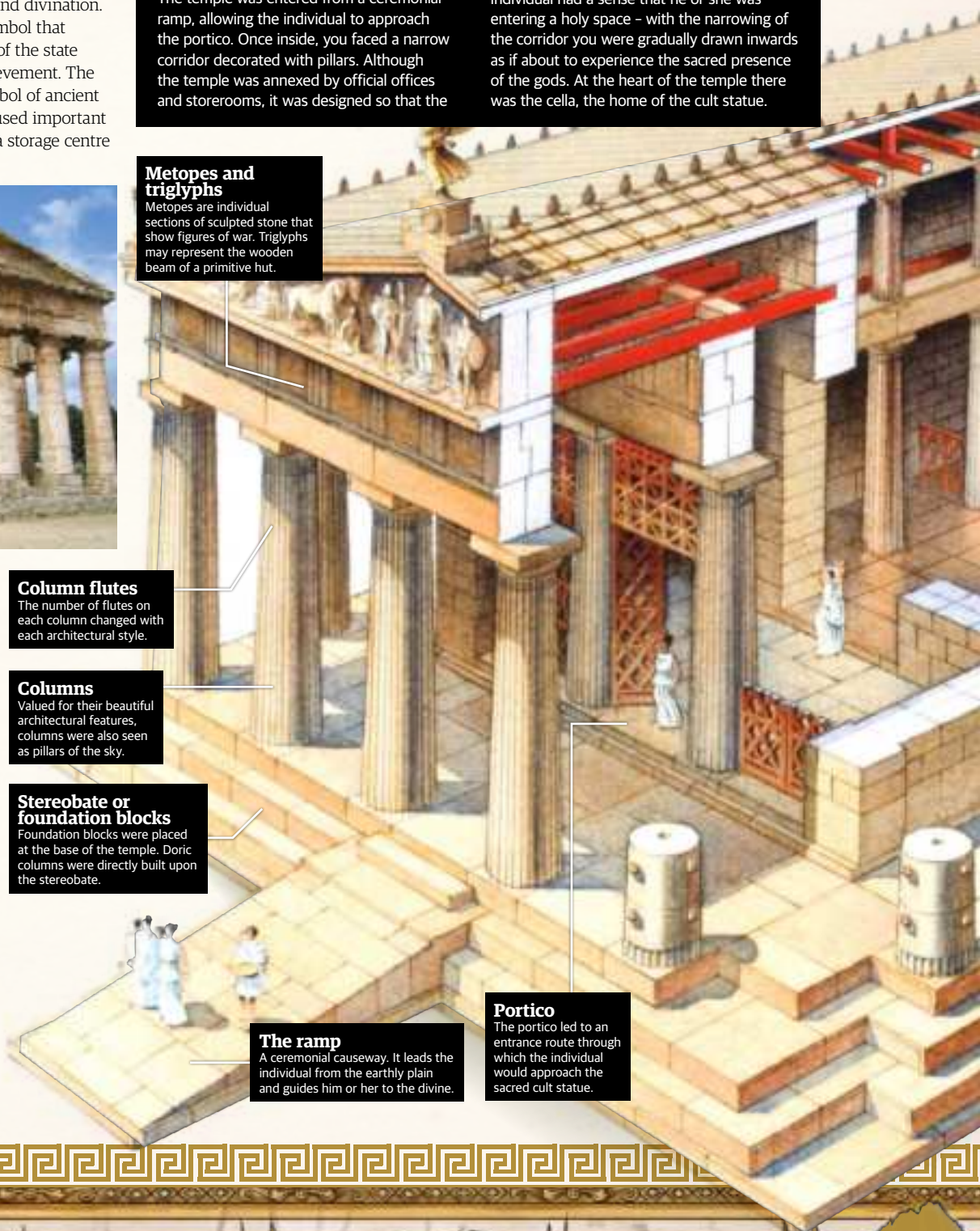
Foundation blocks were placed at the base of the temple. Doric columns were directly built upon the stereobate.

### The ramp

A ceremonial causeway. It leads the individual from the earthly plain and guides him or her to the divine.

### Portico

The portico led to an entrance route through which the individual would approach the sacred cult statue.







## How to identify Greek columns

### Doric



These columns are short, heavy structures with plain capitals. They have no base and their height measures four to eight times their diameter. They are decorated with 20 flutes. The base of the column was placed directly on the stylobate (or foundation stone).

### Ionic



Ionic columns are graceful and slender - they differ from the Doric in that they are designed with a large base for extra support. They are easily distinguished by their large scrolled features. The Ionic column has 24 flutes.

### Corinthian



The Corinthian column is ornate and elaborate, and is often more appealing than the Doric and Ionic columns described above. The column is tall and slim. Designed with 24 flutes, it is crafted with a scrumptious capital, which is sculpted with scrolls and acanthus leaves.

## Building the temple

The temple was viewed not only as an edifice of marble, wood and stone, but a magical structure that was designed on astronomical principles. With this in mind, early construction began with the foundation ceremony, creating a base that is known as a stereobate. This consisted of several layers of stone blocks, their tips protruding above ground. The workers employed simple tools of bronze and copper. During construction they also used

mallets, chisels and ropes to create a further foundation block called a crepidoma, which acted as a base for the columns and walls. The columns, which were made of several drums of fluted stone, supported the entablature, which consisted of the architrave and the frieze which lay below the cornice. Temple construction could take over a decade, the building often covered 115m x 55m of land and boasted columns that reached 15 to 20m in height. On completion, the temple was decorated by craftsmen.





# THE ANCIENT OLYMPICS

Explore the origins of the Olympics, from the festival, athletes and events to the mythology

Every four years from 776 BCE to around 425 CE, competitors and spectators flocked to a sanctuary in southern Greece to participate in one of the most extraordinary events of the ancient world. It was a festival in honour of Zeus, king of the gods, who ruled from the snow-capped peaks of Mount Olympus far to the north. Indeed, it was from Olympian Zeus that the location of the sanctuary was named: Olympia.

The festival had humble origins. In its early years, participants came mainly from Elis, the city just under 65 kilometres (40 miles) away that controlled the sanctuary. On the morning following the August full moon, they sang hymns, chanted prayers, and sacrificed oxen to Zeus, burning the bones and fat on the altar as an offering before cooking the meat for that evening's banquet.

As the mouth-watering aromas filled the air, many of those present made their way a little to the east, stripped down to their loincloths - only from 720 BCE were competitors naked - and, while the rest looked on, raced back to the finishing line near the altar. The distance, around 180 metres, was called in Greek a 'stade', the origin of our word 'stadium'. In 30 seconds the race was over, and in 776 BCE the winner was proclaimed. He was a local baker called Coroebus, that year's only victor, for the foot race was the only contest. The Olympic Games began as one Olympic game.

So it remained for two generations, but from 724 BCE other events were introduced, and the reputation of the festival began to spread. Coincidentally, this was a time of new beginnings for the Greeks, as many mainland cities sent shiploads of citizens to plant new settlements in foreign lands from Marseilles in the west to Byzantium in the east, and from Cyrene in Libya to Epidamnus in modern Albania. As the Greek footprint expanded, Greeks felt a growing need to maintain, or create, a cultural identity. The

5th-century-BCE historian Herodotus writes that what united them was "kinship in blood and speech, the shrines of gods, the sacrifices that we have in common, and the similarity of our lifestyle". He might have added 'competitiveness', because inspiring almost every Greek was the advice given to Achilles in the *Iliad*, a poem with its roots in the 8th century BCE: "Always to be best and to surpass all others".

As the *Iliad*, with its tales of bravery culminating in funeral games for Patroclus, was fuelling the Greeks' imaginations, the setting where they could locate themselves as the true heirs of the heroes of the Trojan War was fast becoming recognised as Olympia and, although other sports-related festivals sprang up - notably at Delphi, Corinth and Nemea - the Olympics reigned supreme. By the 6th century BCE, competitors were arriving from all over the Greek world and, when in the early 5th century mainland Greeks successfully fought off the Persian invasions while Sicilian Greeks defeated the Carthaginians and Etruscans, it was at Olympia that they made offerings of thanks.

As the festival's status grew, the Games expanded to cover five days. At the same time, new opportunities to display power through

sacrifice and banquets meant that Olympia was now attracting not just athletes but the rich and influential, as well as kings and politicians eager to strut the international stage, hold high-level conferences and negotiate high-profile deals.

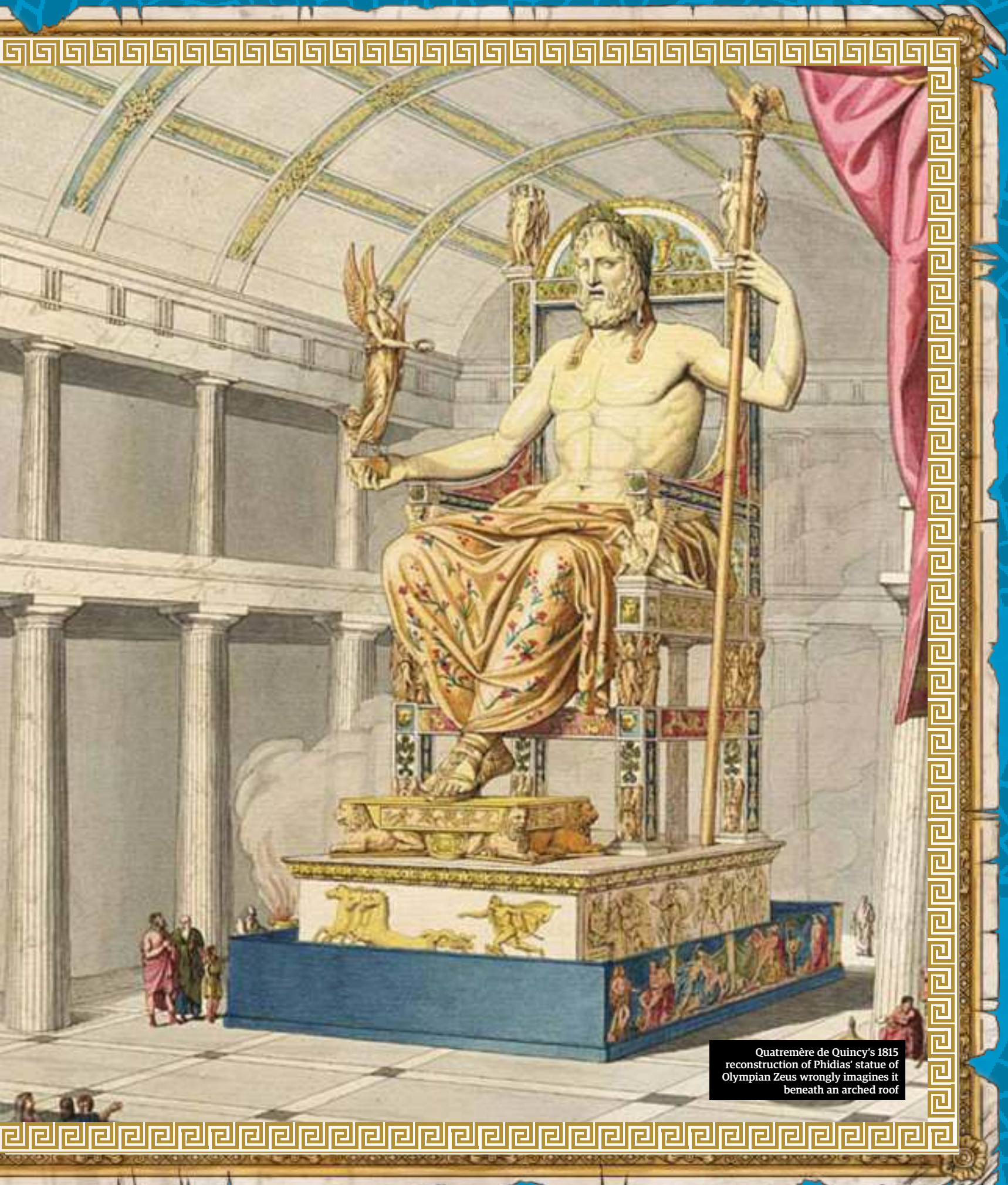
Many were keen to compete in the chariot race, the Games' most expensive event. Among them was Alexander I, King of Macedon, whose people many considered not to be pure Greeks. In 504 BCE, he successfully proved his eligibility by tracing his ancestors back to the Peloponnesian city of Argos. Almost a century later in 416 BCE, the Athenian playboy politician Alcibiades too used the Olympic chariot race to proclaim his wealth and power by entering an unrivalled seven teams. Unsurprisingly he won, and to celebrate he entertained the spectators to a banquet, paid for in part by his wealthy backers from the Aegean islands of Chios and Lesbos.

Meanwhile, as the numbers of attendees swelled each year, others were attracted to the event, too. It wasn't just merchants who were hoping to make valuable sales, but writers such as Herodotus, who read his *Histories* from the portico of Zeus' temple; artists such as Zeuxis, the inventor of *trompe l'oeil*, who wafted round Olympia in a cloak advertising his name in golden letters; and poets like the praise-singer

One thing that didn't survive in the original structures or the later imitations was colour - the Greeks painted buildings

"On the morning following the August full moon, they sang hymns, chanted prayers and sacrificed oxen"





Quatremère de Quincy's 1815 reconstruction of Phidias' statue of Olympian Zeus wrongly imagines it beneath an arched roof





Devotees of the most brutal of sport, pankratists break the rules forbidding biting and eye-gouging

## "A parallel four-yearly women's festival was held at Olympia in honour of the goddess Hera"

Pindar, who was eager to win commissions from victorious athletes.

Although the far-seeing orator Isocrates used the panhellenic gathering to make heartfelt pleas for Greek unity in the face of strong aggressors, they fell on deaf ears. At the battle of Chaeronea in 338 BCE, Philip II of Macedon defeated the mainland Greek states and marked his victory by erecting his 'Philippeion' - a round temple containing statues of himself and his family - at Olympia next to the Temple of Hera, wife of Zeus.

Under the Roman Empire, the Olympics continued to thrive, though occasionally an emperor might bend the rules. In 67 CE, Nero not only rescheduled the Games to allow him to take part, he also tried to show his prowess by driving his own ten-horse chariot. But nothing went to plan. His biographer Suetonius records: "He fell from his chariot and was helped back in, but he could not continue and gave up before the end. Even so he won the victor's crown."

At last Christianity put paid to the Olympic Festival. After all, it was in honour of a pagan god. Outlawed in 391 CE by the Christian emperor Theodosius, the Olympics struggled on for another 30 years. However, by 425 CE the Games were no more.

### MYTHOLOGY

All classical accounts of the Olympics' origins involved mythology. Some maintained that it was at Olympia that Zeus defeated his father Cronus and assumed control of gods and mortals. Others claimed that Heracles established the first Games to celebrate his victory over the local King Augeas, who had refused to pay the hero for one of his 12 labours, cleansing the royal stables.

Still others disagreed. For them, the founder of the Games was Pelops, an Ionian prince from Phocaea (modern Foça in Turkey). Learning that the wealthy Greek king Oenomaus was offering his daughter, Hippodamia, in marriage to whomever beat him in a chariot race, Pelops was determined to win. Even though he possessed a team of magical horses, a gift from the god Poseidon, he took no chances. He bribed the chariot technician, Myrtilus, to remove the lynch pins from Oenomaus' wheels and substitute them with wax replicas.

As the wheels rotated ever faster, the friction made these lynch pins melt; the chariot collapsed and Oenomaus was dragged to an excruciating death. However, instead of honouring his side of the agreement (to let Myrtilus sleep with Hippodamia), Pelops threw him off a cliff. But

Myrtilus' ghost haunted Pelops, and the only way he could appease it was by performing funeral games - the first Olympic Games.

The influence of all three foundation myths were felt at Olympia. Dominating the Altis was a magnificent Temple of Zeus, within whose incense-laden inner chamber was a stunning statue of the seated god wearing the olive crown, awarded to victorious athletes. Created in a specially built onsite workshop by the Athenian sculptor Phidias, it was 12 metres (39 feet) high and faced in gold and ivory, the only one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World located on Greek soil. Such was its numinous beauty that even the 2nd-century-CE Stoic philosopher Epictetus enthused that "people would consider it a great misfortune to die without ever seeing it". Transported to Constantinople by rapacious Romans, the statue was destroyed by fire in 462 CE, but we can still appreciate its power: Byzantine iconographers used it as their model for the face of God.

Meanwhile, a stone's throw from Zeus' temple to the north, Pelops' grave mound was the site of one of the festival's most solemn ceremonies, when a black ram was sacrificed to the dead hero, while Heracles, said to be the first to make this sacrifice, was praised for something altogether more prosaic. Legend told that thanks to his sacrifice to the very specifically named Zeus 'who banishes flies', Zeus Apomuios, he caused Olympia to be fly-free.

Spectators had good reason to be thankful, especially since the Games were celebrated in the scorching heat of August, when conditions could be horrendous. For the five days surrounding the



Wrestler Milo of Croton won five consecutive Olympics before being savaged to death by wolves



new moon, those tens of thousands of spectators, who could not afford to stay at the Leonidaion – a ‘hotel’ built by a far-sighted entrepreneur in 360 BCE – pitched tents or slept rough outside the sanctuary with little running water and no sanitation, a jostling mêlée of increasingly rank bodies. For some, such as Epictetus, the overarching memory was “the sunburn and the filth... the cacophony, the din, the jostling, the shoving, the crowding, and so many people, each absorbed in doing his own thing”. However, even

he would admit: “I think you’re happy to put up with all of this when you think of the splendour of the spectacles.”

## ATHLETES

Being a masculine religious festival in honour of dead heroes and the great god Zeus, women, with the one exception of the priestess of Demeter, were forbidden to attend the Games – though a parallel four-yearly women’s festival was held at Olympia in honour of the goddess Hera.

Gender was not the only restriction when it came to the Olympics. No convicted murderer could enter the Games unless they had first undergone a lengthy purification ritual, and all participants were required to speak fluent Greek. Theoretically, any free man could take part, irrespective of social status. Indeed, the flamboyant Alcibiades refused to participate in any sport except chariot racing, the preserve of the rich, because it would mean competing with people of a lower class.

## The sanctuary of Olympia in the 2nd century

Bristling with statues of victorious athletes, Olympia was dominated by the marble-roofed Temple of Zeus. Beyond Pelops’ grave-mound, the original wooden columns of the Temple of Hera (700 BCE) were gradually replaced in stone, while to the northeast the stadium was separated from the sanctuary by an artificial rise.

### Philippeion

Built to immortalise Philip II’s victory in battle, this exquisite rotunda housed statues not of gods but of Macedonia’s royal family.

### Grave mound of Pelops

Surrounded by white poplar trees, here, beneath the August full moon, priests slaughtered a black ram, letting its blood soak the earth for the hero’s ghost to drink.

### Temple of Hera

This 7th-century-BCE temple housed an archaic statue of the seated goddess with Zeus standing beside her, and the ‘Discus of Iphitus’, inscribed with the terms of the Olympic Truce.

### Zanes statues

Overlooked by a row of temple-like treasuries, the statues were paid for from fines on cheating competitors, named and shamed on bases that still survive today.

### Stadium

Races on the packed-earth track, 180m (590ft) in length (the distance the Greeks called a ‘stade’), were watched by spectators standing on the manmade mound surrounding three sides.

### To Hippodrome

The 180m- (590ft-) long Hippodrome, scene of the thrilling horse and chariot races, was an elliptical race track. Buried in silt by the flooding River Alpheus, its site was not rediscovered until 2008.

### Phidias’ Workshop

An exact replica of the interior of Zeus’ Temple (save for the addition of windows), Phidias created the god’s gold and ivory sculpture here before assembling it in situ.

### Temple of Zeus

Adorned with exterior sculptures showing mythological scenes, the temple housed a 12m- (39ft-) high seated statue of Zeus faced in gold and ivory, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.

### Leonidaion

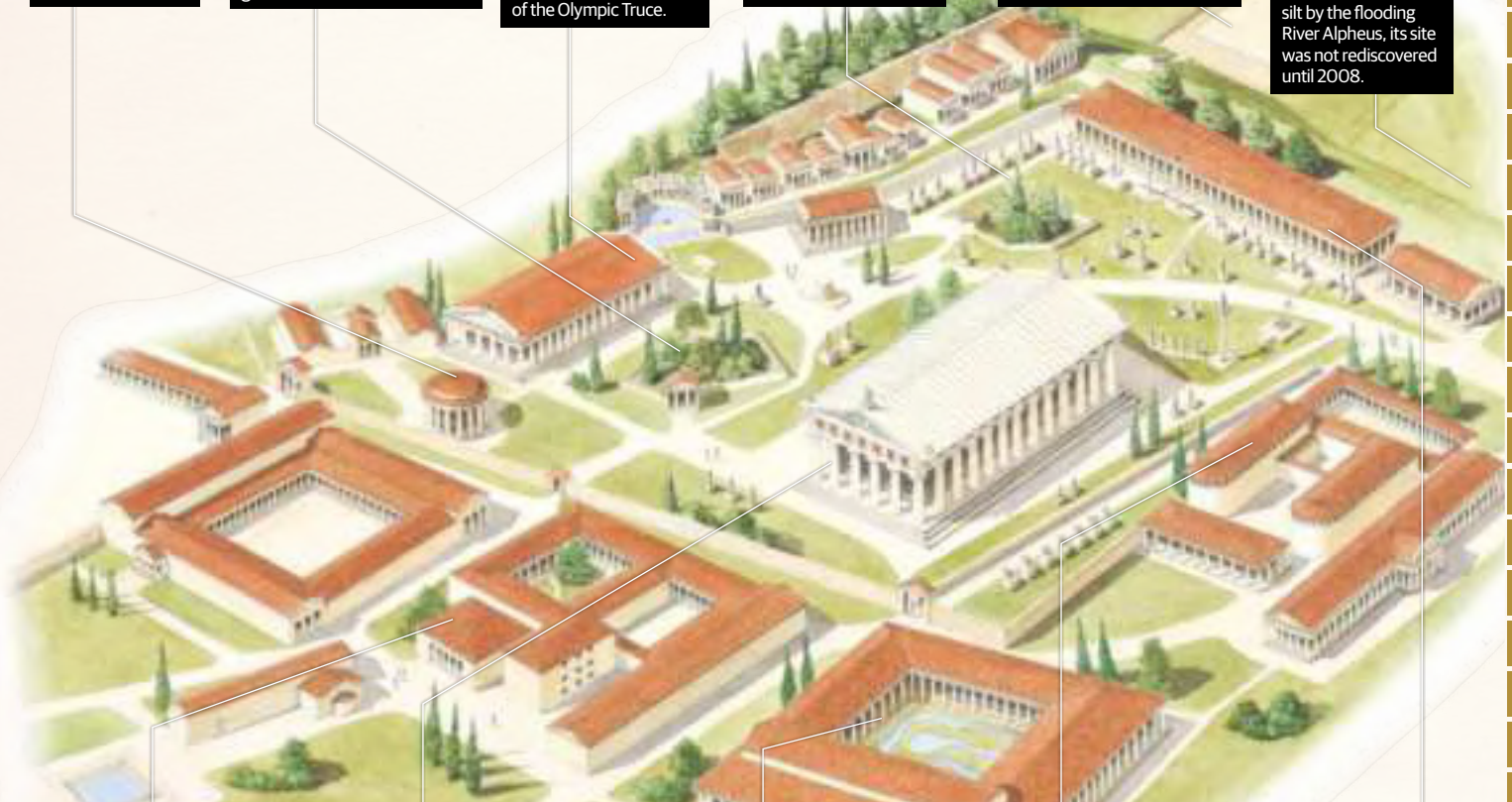
73m (239ft) square and constructed between 330 and 320 BCE by Leonidas of Naxos, this proto-hotel featured a central courtyard with fragrant shrubs and splashing fountains.

### Bouleuterion

In this complex of two apsidal buildings flanking a central chamber with a colonnaded frontage, the Olympic Council met, presided over by a forbidding statue of Zeus Horkios (‘Zeus, Oath God’).

### Stoa of the Echoes

This stoa (portico), 90m (295ft) long, was begun in the mid 4th century BCE. Excellent acoustics made it the ideal setting for contests between trumpeters.







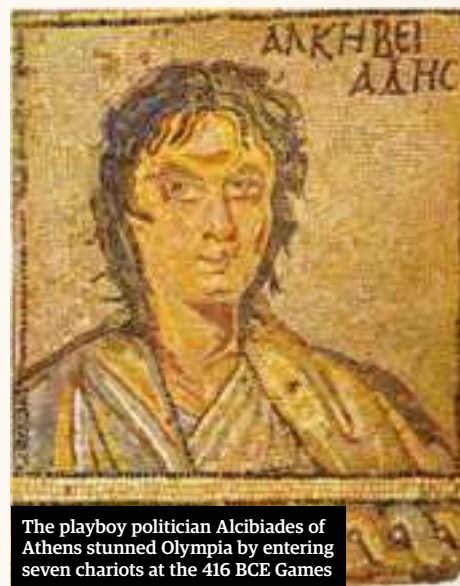
The only other category involved age. There were a handful of contests for boys: boxing, wrestling, the 'stade' race, and - for one year only in 628 BCE - the pentathlon. For every other competition, athletes had to be adults over 20. A month before the Games began, all were required to gather at Elis, the city that controlled the festival. Here, they were compelled to train and compete in initial heats under the stern watch of the Hellanodikai ('Judges of the Greeks'), while decisions were made about who should compete in which event.

It was now, too, that age categories were decided, something that without supporting documentation could be very sensitive. Sometimes, judgements were controversial. In 468 BCE, Pherias of Aegina was prevented from taking part in the men's wrestling because he looked too young. Another contestant, Nicasylos of Rhodes, was so well-developed that he was made to wrestle as an adult even though he was

only 18. He won his match, as well as others elsewhere, but so brutal were the contests that he died at 20.

It was participants in contact sports who attracted the greatest interest and controversy. Perhaps the most famous was the wrestler Milo, victorious at five successive Olympics over 20 years. Stories about his strength were numerous, and when a neighbouring city attacked his hometown of Croton in south Italy, Milo dressed in a lion skin and strode out to meet them wielding a club. Believing him to be Heracles reincarnated, the invaders fled.

Even Milo's death was sensational. The travel writer Pausanias reports that "somewhere in the Crotonian territory he came across a tree of dry wood split open and held with wedges. Milo decided to put his hands inside the tree, but the wedges slipped and he was held fast. Then the wolves found him. These beasts are particularly abundant in the territory of Croton..."



The playboy politician Alcibiades of Athens stunned Olympia by entering seven chariots at the 416 BCE Games

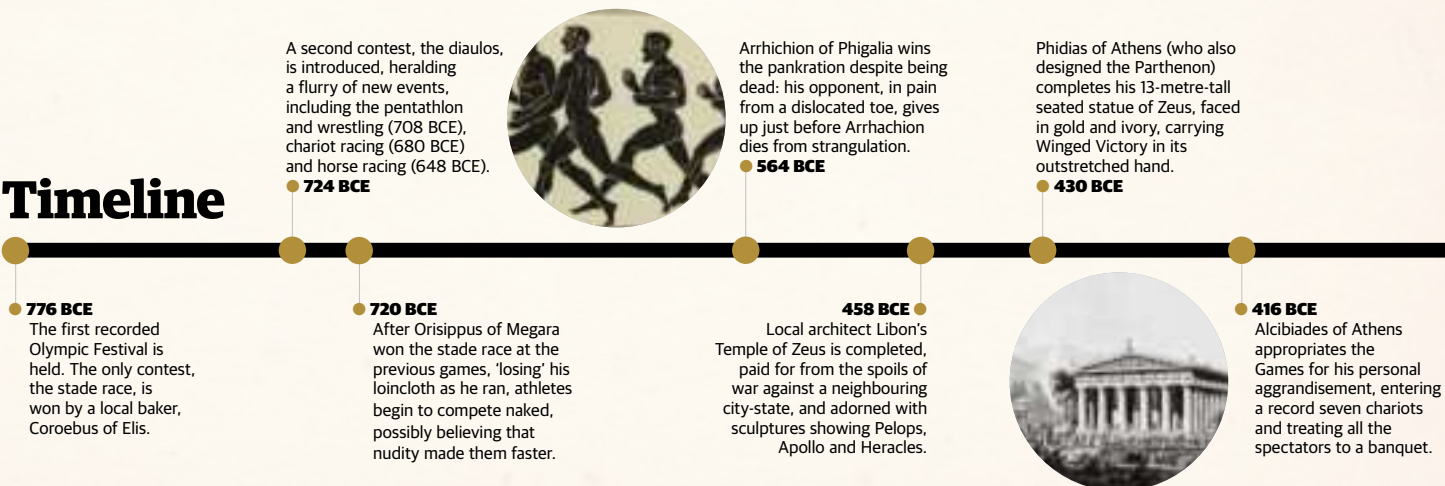


The Philippeion, commemorating Philip II's victory over Greece, housed statues of Macedon's royal family

But it was a boxer who first brought the Games into disrepute. All participants were required to meet in the Olympic Council Building to swear an oath over the body of a boar that they would not cheat. However, in 388 BCE, Eupolus of Thessaly bribed three opponents. The Hellanodikai fined all four men and with the money set up four statues of Zeus, the so-called Zanes, on the path down to the stadium, with inscriptions naming and shaming the guilty parties. The bases of 16 Zanes can still be seen today.

A more coveted memorial was awarded to the winner of the stade race. Individual cities were usually named each year after their chief magistrate, often leading to confusion for anyone trying to compile more regional chronologies. In the late 5th century BCE, the philosopher Hippias of Elis, wishing to create a universal dating system, invented a solution. He named 776 BCE 'the year of the first Olympiad, when Coroebus of Elis won the stade', 772 BCE 'the year of the first Olympiad, when Antimachus of Elis

## Timeline







Dressed in trademark long flowing robes, a charioteer urges on his four-horse team



These engraved illustrations show some of the earliest Olympic events

won the stade', and so on, with the intervening years numbered accordingly 'the second, third and fourth year of the Olympiad'. His system was accepted. From then on, the Greeks effectively began their historical era with the first Olympiad, and the winner of the stade and his city lived on in history.

## EVENTS

Although the stade was the first competitive event, after the introduction of the diaulos in 724 BCE others followed swiftly. Mostly these were of three types, the first being running: stade, diaulos, dolichos (4.5 kilometres or 2.7 miles), and a stade race in armour. The second consisted of trials of strength: boxing, wrestling, pankration (a deadly combination of barbaric brawling and bare-knuckle fight), as well as throwing the javelin and discus, with the third comprising equestrian

sports: horse races and races for two-, four- and ten-horse chariots as well as a mule-cart races. In addition, the pentathlon combined elements of both strength and speed. Once they were introduced, some events, such as the stade race, lasted for the entire life of the Games. Others, such as the mule-cart race, were quietly dropped.

Unlike at other international festivals, such as the Pythian Games held at Delphi in honour of Apollo or the Panathenaic Festival at Athens, the Olympics contained no formal cultural or artistic element. But there were two curious contests that had little to do with sporting prowess. Introduced in 396 BCE, the competitions for trumpeters and heralds became particularly popular when they found a new home in a colonnade built after the stadium was relocated more than 80 metres (262 feet) to the east of the Temple of Zeus. The acoustic of this so-called Stoa of the Echoes

caused any sound to reverberate no less than seven times.

One event conspicuous by its absence is the marathon, which was inspired by an Ancient Greek athletic feat. In 490 BCE, the runner Pheidippides raced to bring the news of the Greek victory over the Persians from Marathon to Athens, a distance of just over 46 kilometres (28.5 miles). The race was created for the first modern Olympics of 1896, held in Athens, the new capital of a proudly independent Greece. It marked the dawn of a modern Olympic era, secular games that would be largely unrecognisable to Greece's classical forefathers. Where previously athletes had striven 'always to be best', now, as their new founder Baron de Coubertin proclaimed: "What is important in life is not to triumph, but to take part; what is essential is not to have won, but to have fought well."

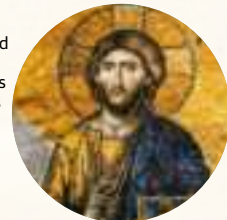
Scandal mars Pisodorus of Rhodes' win in the boys' boxing match when his trainer is found to be a woman - his mother, who narrowly escapes execution as punishment for attending.  
● **388 BCE**



Leonidas of Rhodes wins the stade, diaulos and hoplitodromos races, a feat he repeats in the next two Olympics. His record nine wins is broken only in 2016 by Michael Phelps.  
● **164 BCE**

Nero builds a palace and triumphal arch near the hippodrome, 'winning' the ten-horse chariot race despite falling out and failing to complete the course.  
● **67 CE**

The statue of Zeus, removed to a patrician's palace in Constantinople in 390 CE, is destroyed by fire, but it has already inspired Byzantine artists' impressions of the face of God.  
● **462 CE**



● **356 BCE**  
Philip II of Macedon learns of his chariot victory and the birth of his son, Alexander the Great, on the same day. His later Philippeion commemorates his defeat of Greece.

● **40 CE**  
Caligula tries to remove the statue of Zeus to Rome, but his workmen refuse to continue when they hear unearthly groans emanating from inside it.



● **391 CE**  
With Christianity now the religion of imperial Rome, Emperor Theodosius bans all pagan worship, but the Olympic Games probably continue in some form until 425 CE.

Inspired by the ancient Games, English public schools and Shropshire's Much Wenlock Olympics, Pierre de Coubertin organises the first modern Olympics in Athens. The Greek Spyros Louis wins the marathon.

● **1896**





# GREEK MYTHS & MONSTERS

For those living in Ancient Greece the myths that we still tell today were not simply stories, but an integral part of their society and culture

There are many ancient cultures, and most of them have their own ancient mythologies, from the mighty Norse gods of Odin and Thor to the animal-like figures of the Egyptian religion. But none of these have proved as enduring as the tales and heroes of Greek mythology. With its cautionary tales of men and women who were led down dark paths by their own excess, mighty gods and beautiful goddesses, and heroes who vanquished the most frightening of beasts, Greek mythology has proved itself so popular that even the rise of Christianity could not squash it.

This mythology was just as important to the Ancient Greeks. It provided a common history, heroes and religion to the many different tribes, uniting them together as one people. Not only did it help spread Greek as a language, but it also worked in tandem with the growth of their society, providing answers to huge questions about their place in the universe and why the planet behaved the way it did. Mythology became more than simply fantastical tales; it was integral to the Greeks' way of life, and it touched on every part of their society. Present from when

the people woke in the morning to when they fell asleep, mythology was the beating heart of Ancient Greece.

As with almost all myths, tales and legends Greek mythology began life as an oral tradition. Without widespread literacy the stories were likely told to listeners by Bronze Age Minoan and

Mycenaean bards. We know little about how this oral tradition developed, and while

it is likely that tales became more embellished and differed by region, it is also possible that there were strict rules for story-telling. It wasn't until the 8th century BCE that these oral traditions were written down. The most famous of the early written sources of Greek mythology are Homer's epic poems, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, detailing the Trojan War and the story of Odysseus respectively. Another early source and basis for Greek

mythology is Hesiod's *Theogony* and *Works and Days*, which concern the origin of the gods and the creation of man.

From this point onwards, the representation and retelling of myths steamed forward with vigour. Epic duels between heroes and monsters, muses, gods and a cornucopia of mythical scenes and stories were painted on pottery of all kinds. These popular and portable forms of storytelling

Women are generally not portrayed well in Greek myth. The first woman, Pandora was responsible for unleashing evil in the world







One of the most famous and beloved myths of the Greeks was that of the Trojan War





## Perseus and Medusa

Acrisius, king of Argos, growing frustrated at not having a son, went to the oracle of Delphi for advice. However, she told him that his own grandson was fated to kill him. Terrified of the warning, he imprisoned his daughter, Danae, in a room beneath the earth. However, Danae fell pregnant as Zeus pierced through the walls of the chamber in the form of golden rain. Wanting to be rid of his grandson, Acrisius sent the newborn Perseus and Danae out into the open sea. However, the two washed ashore Serifos Island.

As Perseus grew up, the king of the island, Polydectes, began to lust after Danae and, knowing he could not approach her with Perseus protecting her, sent him off on a dangerous mission. He challenged him to return with the head of the Gorgon Medusa. Medusa's origin story differs, but most paint her as a beautiful maiden who was punished by Athena and turned into a monster with live snakes for hair, whoever looked upon her was turned to stone.

Perseus asked Athena and Hermes for assistance and they gifted him winged sandals, a cap of invisibility and a mirrored shield. Using the mirrored shield, Perseus was able to approach Medusa without looking directly at her. He cut off Medusa's head and completed the task. Perseus would continue to use the head as a weapon, turning Polydectes to stone.



There were actually three Gorgon sisters; Medusa, Stheno and Euryale

didn't require literate readers, and helped the myths spread wider afield. Many of some of the most well-known myths, such as the trials of Herakles, were found on pottery, rather than literary texts. Many more pottery pieces pre-date the first recorded literary versions of the same tales. Myths then began to permeate the very structures of Greek civilisation, public buildings like the Parthenon, the Temple of Apollo and the Temple of Zeus were adorned with painstakingly crafted statues and images from mythology.

These tales of heroes and monsters were not campfire stories, but a very central, crucial part of Greek culture and civilisation. In the 5th century the beloved myths were reborn in theatre, by the work of the tragic writers Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. The figures from myth and legend were made real, dramatised in front of thousands of eager viewers who would fill stadiums to see the stories they already knew retold again and again. Mythology for the Ancient Greeks was more than religion, more than entertainment; it permeated every part of their lives. Although it would be wrong to assume every Greek was a fervent believer, their importance in society and the significance they held in the culture itself is clear to see, even today.

Like most religions and mythologies, the myths set out to answer some of the deepest questions of the human existence, most notably - where did we come from? Who made the world? The Greeks explained this with 'Chaos', a yawning void of nothingness from which sprung Gaia (the Earth) and other divine beings. The story goes on to tell tales of repeated father-son usurping, a relatable story for the patriarchal society of heirs and inherited power. Like many Greek myths, although the stories themselves are fantastical (like Zeus swallowing his wife to avoid being usurped by his own offspring) the key themes and morals are relatable, which is likely why they resonated so strongly with the people.

The Ancient Greeks were led by philosophy and science. They were driven by pursuits of the mind and were quick to question the nature of the world. This can certainly explain why so many Greek myths provide explanations for natural phenomena.

Although they are far from scientific, the myths provide answers to a curious nation for some of the basic aspects of nature. For example, the sunset and sunrise are explained as the result of the god Helios riding his chariot across the sky, while earthquakes are the god of the sea, Poseidon, crashing his trident into the ground. There are myths to explain echoes, rainbows, constellations, the passing of the seasons. Even the nature of time itself is woven into myth, Helios has 350 herds of cattle for each day of the year, the moon goddess Selene had 50 daughters to represent the 50 lunar months of the four-year

## "Mythology for the Ancient Greeks was more than religion, more than entertainment"

Olympiad cycle - a Greek measurement of time. In this way not only were myths there to provide answers to unknown natural occurrences, but they also became woven and developed as the Greek advanced themselves.

Whether the majority of Greeks thoroughly believed the explanations given in myths is up for debate. We do know that by the 6th century BCE, philosophers had become sceptical about the tales, seeking scientific, rational explanations for nature's curiosities. However, this did not slow the popularity of the myths, likely because of the strong resonance the tales had for the Greeks.

Moral lessons form the basis of almost every Greek myth in some capacity and they were not



One of the most terrifying monsters was the sphinx; those who could not answer its tricky riddles were doomed to be eaten by it



written to entertain, but to serve as lessons and warnings. It is interesting that Greek gods, unlike the gods of most religions were flawed. The heart of the dramas are not tales of the divine but of real people; they fall in love, they get jealous, fight and make mistakes. For example, Hera, the wife of Zeus, is shown as being spiteful and jealous because of her husband's affairs. However, the subject of her hate is not her cheating husband, but the women he cheats on her with. Aphrodite, the goddess of love, bribes Paris to name her the most beautiful goddess by promising him the most beautiful woman in the world as a prize. He does so and she gives him Helen, thus starting the battle of Troy.

These and many more similar myths are cautionary tales, advising the listener how to live their lives to avoid grisly fates. The tale of King Midas, who wishes for everything he touches to turn to gold, but then almost starves to death as a result symbolises the evils and dangers of greed. Hubris, the sin of excessive pride and arrogance, was a crucial moral concept to the Greeks. These cautionary tales warned the population against extremes, and emphasised the importance of moderation. This was the same society that believed that athletics and intellect should both feature equally in their competitions and games, and their myths demonstrate time and time again that anything done to excess will lead a person down the path of ill-fate.

Although modern admirers of Greek myth are typically more fascinated with the tales of gods and goddesses, the contemporary audience's favourites were by far from the age of heroes - where it is mortals who take centre stage, fight epic battles and, against all odds, achieve greatness. Many of these heroes like Herakles and Achilles bridge the gap between god and man as they have divine parents, but mortal flaws. Their fantastic tales of adventure and peril are not simply to entertain, but to portray the boons of certain ideal qualities.



Monsters  
were born from  
one being - Echidna,  
half woman, half  
serpent. Her husband  
was a dragon with 100  
heads - Typhon

Icarus was a victim of hubris,  
as he draws to the Sun, the  
wax in his wings melts and  
he falls to his death

## Odysseus and the cyclops

After enjoying a victory at Troy, a clever Greek leader, Odysseus, set sail and came upon an island. Growing increasingly hungry, Odysseus led his men towards the sound of bleating goats. They found a large cave full of provisions, filled their bellies and fell asleep. However they were startled awake by a man as big as a barn with one giant eye; it was Polyphemus, a cyclops, leading his large herd of sheep back to the cave. Enraged by the men's theft, the monster seized two of the Greeks, bashed them against rocks and ate their remains. He rolled a huge stone before the mouth of the cave and fell asleep.

When Polyphemus awoke he consumed two more men, then rolled away the stone, led his

sheep out then rolled it back. While the monster was gone, Odysseus and his men made a sharp stick. When the cyclops returned, Odysseus offered him strong wine, which he consumed and became drunk. He asked for Odysseus' name to which he responded, "Nobody."

When the cyclops fell asleep, Odysseus took the stick, heated it in the fire and drove it into Polyphemus' eye. He howled with pain, but the other cyclopes did not help him as he claimed that "Nobody" did it. Blinded, Polyphemus led his sheep out the next morning, unaware that Odysseus and his men were tied to their bellies. It wasn't until Odysseus was safely in his boat that he told the furious Polyphemus his name.



Polyphemus's name means  
'abounding in songs and legends'





## Hades and Persephone

Hades, god of the underworld and brother of Zeus, stumbled upon Persephone, a goddess and daughter of Demeter, the goddess of harvest and agriculture. He quickly fell in love, but Demeter was very protective of her offspring. Hades instead asked Zeus' permission to abduct her, which he gave. Hades broke through a great cleft in the earth as Persephone was gathering flowers and took her away to the underworld.

Demeter, distraught at her daughter's disappearance, searched all over the world, neglecting her role in nature and all ceased to grow. Finally, she discovered where her daughter was taken and Zeus, pressured by the hunger of his people, bid her release.

However, Hades was not too keen to lose his bride. Before he released Persephone he gave her pomegranate seeds to eat, and as she had tasted food of the underworld, she was fated to spend one-third of each year there, then return to the world of gods above. These three months that Demeter must face without her beloved daughter became winter, where the land grows cold and nothing will grow.



Persephone was not only worshipped as goddess of the underworld, but also of springtime, flowers and vegetation

The tale of Herakles fighting through 12 dangerous and daring labours is one of strength but, to a larger degree, perseverance. Penelope, the wife of Odysseus, displays the trait of fidelity as she dutifully waits for her husband to return from the war, rejecting her suitors until he returns and they live a long and happy life. This story sent a clear message to women particularly about the importance of loyalty to their spouses in a society where women were seen as 'belonging' to a man, and adultery was judged as worse than rape.

In many cases the development and frequency of certain themes in Greek mythology increased alongside Ancient Greek customs. For example, at



Nymphs are frequently seen in Greek mythology, usually connected with nature

the same time that it became normal in society for older men to have a younger, male sexual companion, tales of relationships between male gods and male heroes became more prevalent. Eventually almost every major male god had their own adolescent male partner, such as Zeus and Ganymede. Previous myths which had no obvious relation to same-sex male relationships were retold in a new light, such as the heroes of the Trojan War, Achilles and Patroclus. While previously their close relationship had been portrayed as 'brothers in arms' by Homer, by the time poets Plato and Aeschylus retold the story, the two were lovers. Greek society was not only influenced by myth, but myth also reacted to and was transformed by the changes in society, the two were intrinsically linked, and as Greek culture grew and developed, so did the myths.

A classic, repeated feature of Greek mythology are strange, terrifying and bizarre monsters. Odysseus faces a one eyed cyclops in his quest, Hercules must defeat a hydra with multiple heads, there's the Gorgon Medusa who can turn a man to stone with a look and Cerberus, the monstrous beast who guards the gates of hell. These fierce

beasts are often more memorable than the heroes themselves, and their terrifying descriptions emphasise the difficulty of the tasks the heroes must overcome, highlighting their bravery and cunning in defeating them.

Many of these beasts are chaotic mixes of creatures, unnatural and terrifying. A prime example is the Chimera, a fire-breathing monstrosity with the head and body of a lion, head of a goat and a snake's tail. They represent chaos and lack of reason; by defeating them the heroes maintain the natural order of things. This, again, had echoes in society, where law and order were valued highly with the creation of the Draconian constitution, and those who upset the order of society or went against it found themselves exiled or killed.

Another explanation for the presence of these terrible creatures is that they represented the unknown world beyond Ancient Greek knowledge. The unfamiliar, and perhaps alarming, experiences that travelling Greeks experienced could explain some of the bizarre but somewhat recognisable features of myths. The huge, sprawling palace of King Minos in Crete may have





Hades is often seen as 'evil' but this isn't strictly true, he and Zeus are brothers, and drew lots to rule the lower and upper worlds



Narcissus is a classic warning against vanity, as the handsome man becomes besotted with his own reflection

come across to a visiting Greek as a labyrinth. Bull-leaping and the worship of bulls in general was also rampant in Crete, which could explain the bull-like Minotaur that was encased within the maze in the myth. It seems more than a coincidence that in the tale the person who is charged with fighting this beast is a visiting Athenian. Frequently these creatures lay on distant lands, like the Sirens who reside on small

islands, beckoning sailors to their doom. It would make sense that a society who was just exploring the vast world outside, would view it as one filled with danger and strange sights, and this was portrayed through myths.

Whether the Greek people regarded it as fact, legend or simply stories, Greek myth permeated every part of Greek life. Not only did it inspire art, sculpture and poetry, but it also served as

important life lessons and warnings for the people of Ancient Greece. Society and myth were intrinsically intertwined as when one was developed it inevitably affected the other. In this way, whether based on true events or not, Greek mythology can tell us much about the culture that created it, the questions the people had, their view of the world, their values and the development of their own society.

## Orpheus and Eurydice

Orpheus, son of Apollo and the muse Calliope, was gifted with immense musical talent. It was said that his lyre playing and singing were so beautiful that he could enchant inanimate objects. It was this music that had attracted the wood nymph Eurydice to him. It was love at first sight and they were soon married.

However, as they departed the wedding, a jealous shepherd, Aristaeus, jumped on them from a bush, wanting to claim Eurydice for his own. The lovers ran, but Eurydice stumbled and fell into a snake's nest, and was bitten by a viper. Eurydice died.

Orpheus was overcome with grief and travelled to the underworld to get her back. Persuading Hades with his

music, the god promised Orpheus his wife would follow him to the world above, as long as he did not look back at her while she was in the dark. Orpheus journeyed through the underworld, resisting the urge to look back until finally he took a step into the sun and turned around. However, Eurydice was still in the dark, and she was drawn back into the world of the dead.

The heart-broken musician was unable to produce any more music, and he shunned the company of women. One group of scorned women seized him, killed him, then cut his body up and threw all of the pieces into a river. Finally, Orpheus' spirit was free to reunite with his beloved in the underworld.



Orpheus' head and lyre travelled together downstream, still playing beautiful music





# SECRETS OF THE ORACLE

The oracles of Delphi have been shrouded in mystery for millennia, but now scientists believe they have an explanation

**A**ncient Greece was a world dominated by men. Men filled the highest positions in society, men fought on the battlefield and men ruled the mightiest empires. However, all these men, from the lowliest peasant to the emperor himself, sought the council and advice of one person - and that person was a woman.

The city of Delphi had long traditions of being the centre of the world; it was said that Zeus himself named it the navel of Gaia. According to legend, a huge serpent, named Python, guarded the spot before it was slain by the infant god Apollo. When Apollo's arrows pierced the serpent, its body fell into a fissure and great fumes arose from the crevice as its carcass rotted. All those who stood over the gaping fissure fell into sudden, often violent, trances. In this state, it was believed that Apollo would possess the person and fill them with divine presence.

These peculiar occurrences attracted Apollo-worshipping settlers during the Mycenaean era, and slowly but surely the primitive sanctuary grew into a shrine, and then, by 7th century BCE, a temple. It would come to house a single person, chosen to serve as the bridge between this world and the next. Named after the great serpent, this chosen seer was named the Pythia - the oracle.

Communication with a god was no small matter, and not just anyone could be allowed or trusted to serve this venerated position. It was decided that a pure, chaste and honest young virgin would be the most appropriate vessel for such a divine role. However, there was one drawback - beautiful young virgins were prone to attracting negative attention from the men who sought their council, which resulted in oracles being raped and violated. Older women of at least 50 began to fill the position, and as a reminder of what used to be, they would dress in the virginal garments of old.

These older women were often chosen from the priestesses of Delphi temple, but could also be any respected native of Delphi. Educated noblewomen were prized, but even peasants could fill the position. Those Pythia who were previously married were required to relinquish all family responsibility and even their individual identities. To be an oracle was to take up an ancient and vitally important role - one that transcended the self, and entered into legend. Pythia were so important so it was essential that they were a blank slate - children, husbands and any links to previous life had to be severed in favour of Apollo and divinity.

The reason for the growing importance of the oracles was simple - the Pythia provided answers. For an ambitious and religious civilisation, this very visual and vocal link to the gods was treated with the utmost respect. For the nine warmest months of each year, on the seventh day of each month the Pythia would accept questions from all members of Greek society. This was to correspond with the belief that Apollo deserted the temple during the winter months.

After being 'purified' by fasting, drinking holy water and bathing in the sacred Castalian Spring, the Pythia would assume her position upon a tripod seat, clasping laurel reeds in one hand and a dish of spring water in the other. Positioned above the gaping fissure, the vapours of the ancient vanquished serpent would wash over her and she would enter the realm of the divine.

People flocked from far and wide to speak to the woman who could communicate with

the gods. Known as consultants, many of those who wished to ask the oracle a question would travel for days or even weeks to reach Delphi. Once they arrived they underwent an intense grilling from the priests, who would determine the genuine cases and instruct them the correct way to frame their questions. Those who were approved then had to undergo a variety of traditions, such as carrying laurel wreaths to the temple. It was also encouraged for consultants to provide a monetary donation as well as an

animal to be sacrificed. Once the animal had been sacrificed, its guts would be studied.

If the signs were seen as unfavourable, the consultant could be sent home. Finally, the consultant was allowed to approach the Pythia and ask his question. In some accounts, it seems the oracles gave the answers, but others report the Pythia would utter incomprehensible words that the priests would 'translate' into verse. Once he received his

answer, the consultant would journey home to act upon the advice of the oracle.

This was the tricky part. The oracle received a multitude of visitors in the nine days she was available, from farmers desperate to know the outcome of the harvest to emperors asking if they should wage war on their enemies, and her answers were not always clear. Responses, or their translations by the temple priests, often seemed deliberately phrased so that, no matter the outcome, the oracle would always be right. It was essential for the consultant to carefully consider her words, or else risk a bad harvest,











## Ask the oracle

If you have a problem or simply wish to know what the future holds - the oracle has the answer

I'm a Spartan lawmaker and recently outside influence has been threatening our proud nation. Are these other countries a bad influence or am I being an old stick in the mud?

**LYCURGUS, SPARTA**  
Love of money and nothing else will ruin Sparta.

I know it's silly, but I'm absolutely obsessed with my own death! Do you have any idea what I can do to prevent my early demise?

**LYSANDER, SPARTA**

*Beware the serpent, earthborn, in craftiness coming behind thee.*

I've recently captured my own island. I have to come up with some laws but I'm not sure what sort of ruler I should be. Any advice?

**SOLON, ATHENS**

*Seat yourself now amid ships, for you are the pilot of Athens. Grasp the helm fast in your hands; you have many allies in your city.*

An old foe has reared his ugly head and wants to face my soldiers in battle. The only problem is that we are vastly outnumbered. Should I face him?

**LEONIDAS, SPARTA**

*The strength of bulls or lions cannot stop the foe. No, he will not leave off, until he tears the city or the king limb from limb.*

Although I'm already a king, I feel unfulfilled with my life. I want to do something really impressive. What should I do to make my name?

**PHILIP, MACEDON**

*With silver spears you may conquer the world.*

My friend is a really important person, but he's been making some really questionable decisions lately. Should I stick by him?

**CICERO, ARPINO**

*Make your own nature, not the advice of others, your guide in this life.*

My enemy will not leave me alone! I know I can't fight him, but is there a way I can at least defend myself from his attacks?

**THEMISTOCLES, ATHENS**

*A wall of wood alone shall be uncaptured, a boon to you and your children.*

My friend, Socrates, is such a know-it-all. He literally has an answer for everything. Please settle a dispute for us: is there anyone who is smarter than him?

**CHAEREPHON, ATHENS**

*No human is wiser.*

My dad was a very famous soldier and everyone expects me to follow in his footsteps. Now war has broken out, I feel pressured to join the army. But I am not sure. Should I sign up?

**GAIOS, DELPHI**

*You will go, return not die in the war.*

I've sacrificed everything, even family members, for power. But it's still not enough. What can I do to satisfy my greed?

**NERO, ANTUM**

*Your presence here outrages the god that you seek. Go back, matricide! The number 73 marks the hour of your downfall!*



The first oracles were young virgins; they were later replaced with women aged over 50





The site of Delphi was one of the most sacred in Ancient Greece



The oracles' answers would often be translated by temple priests

or even the defeat of an entire army. When Croesus, the king of Lydia, asked the oracle in the 6th century BCE if he should attack Persia, he received the response: "If you cross the river, a great empire will be destroyed." He viewed this as a good omen and went ahead with the invasion. Unfortunately, the great empire that was destroyed was his own. In this way, the oracle, just like the gods, was infallible, and her divine reputation grew. To question the oracle was to question the gods - and that was unthinkable.

Soon, no major decision was made before consulting the oracle of Delphi. It wasn't just Greek people, but also foreign dignitaries, leaders and kings who travelled to Delphi for a chance to ask the oracle a question. Those who could afford it would pay great sums of money for a fast pass through the long lines of pilgrims and commoners. Using these donations, the temple grew in size and prominence.

Quickly, Delphi seemed to be fulfilling its own prophecy of being the centre of the world,

and attracted visitors for the Pythian Games, a precursor of the Olympic Games. On the influence of the oracle's statements, Delphi became a powerful and prosperous city-state. The oracle sat at the centre of not just the city of Delphi, but the great Greek empire itself. No important decision was made without her consultation, and so, for nearly 1,000 years, the position of perhaps the greatest political and social influence in the ancient world was occupied by a woman.





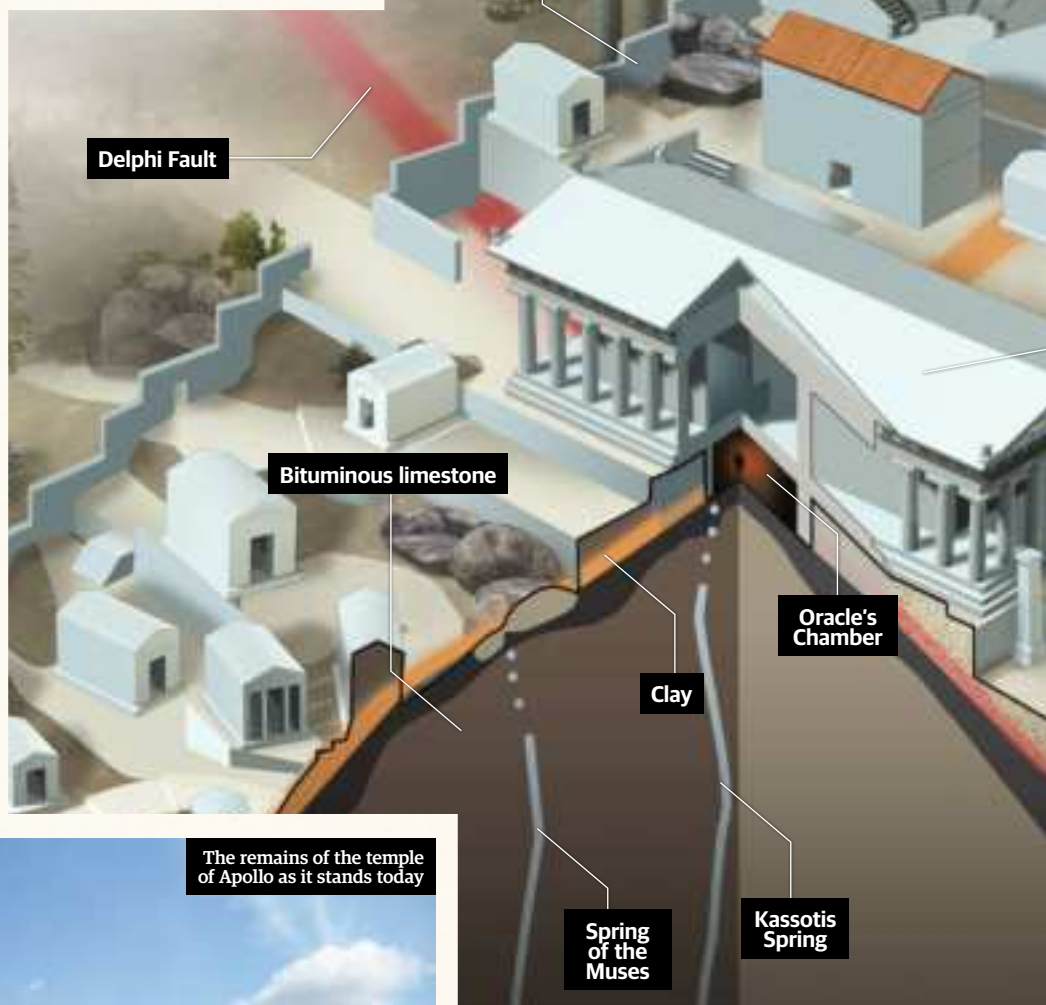
## The science behind the myth

Excavations have revealed that there may be more to the story than first believed...

Ever since the emergence of science in society, a scientific explanation for the Pythia's visionary trances has been sought. One of the most valuable accounts of the oracle's trances comes from Plutarch, who served as a priest at the temple in Delphi. He described how sweet-smelling gases arising from the fissure would cause the priestesses to fall into a strange trance. It seemed there was some truth to Plutarch's account, as when archaeologists studied the temple ruins they discovered a few peculiar features.

The inner sanctum where the Pythia sat, for example, was two to four metres (six to 13 feet) below the level of the surrounding floor, and there was also a nearby drain for spring water. This structure was unique when compared to any other Ancient Greek temple. All of this proved one thing - that there was definitely something strange going on in the temple of Apollo.

Curious about the existence of the fissure mentioned in Plutarch's accounts, in 1892, French archaeologists set about excavating the ruins of the temple with the goal of discovering an ancient cave or hole in the ground. However, surprisingly, nothing of the sort was found. By 1904, it was declared that Plutarch's temple fumes were simply an ancient myth, and never really existed. In 1948, the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* read that:



The remains of the temple of Apollo as it stands today

### Alternative theories

The oracles claimed their trances came from Apollo, scientists blame gases, but these aren't the only explanations for the peculiar incidents





Worship of the oracle came to an end in 390 CE

"Excavation has rendered improbable the post-classical theory of a chasm with mephitic vapours."

That was believed to be true until the late 1980s, when a new team of curious scientists decided to investigate the ruins for themselves. The rocks they discovered beneath the temple were oily bituminous limestone and were fractured by two faults that crossed beneath the temple. This had to be more than a coincidence. The scientists theorised that tectonic movements and ancient earthquakes caused friction along the faults. Combined with the spring water that ran beneath the temple, methane, ethylene and ethane gas would rise through the faults to the centre and directly into the temple. The low room with its limited ventilation and lack of oxygen would help amplify the effect of the gases and induce the trance-like symptoms experienced by the oracles.

It was the ethylene gas especially that drew a lot of interest. Ethylene is a sweet-smelling gas, just like Plutarch had reported, and in small doses is said to have the ability to cause trances and frenzied states. Tests conducted with ethylene reported that a dosage higher than 20% could cause unconsciousness; however, less than that and the patient was able to sit up and answer questions, though their voice was altered. There were also instances of fits, thrashing, loss of memory and altered speech patterns, all of which correspond with Plutarch's accounts of the oracles. However, as is always the case with speculative science, this theory is not universally agreed upon, and other scientists argue that other gases such as carbon dioxide and methane are responsible for the hallucinogenic states.

Either way, it seems the answer to the question of the mysterious Delphi oracles lies in the peculiar structure of the temple and unique geography of the site, which all aligned to produce something truly remarkable.

## The sanctuary of Apollo

At this sacred site, thousands heard the oracle's wisdom

### Snake venom



It is possible that the trances were brought on by snake venom, particularly that of the cobra or krait snake. After becoming

immunised against the venom, a bite from a snake can produce hallucinogenic symptoms that affect the person's emotional and mental state.

### Laurel leaves



Laurel leaves were always carried by the oracles, and they were also reported to chew on them because of their link with

Apollo. It has been hypothesised that it was the leaves that brought on the oracle's trances, but as they are not hallucinogenic, this is unlikely.

### Political puppets



One of the most popular theories explaining the state of the oracles is that they were simply faking their trances. Because of the

power that their prophecies could hold, it's theorised that the priests or the women themselves manipulated this power as they saw fit.





# THE WAY OF THE WARRIOR

War was an integral component of the Ancient Greek way of life, shaping the societies of the city-states and beyond

Legend is an intriguing concoction of tradition, belief, myth, fact and fiction, and that of the Trojan War cast a long shadow across Ancient Greek society. The great conflict, which survives through *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* of the poet Homer, was said to have occurred during the Mycenaean period around the 13th century BCE, only to be followed by three centuries of discord, invasion and the breakdown of civilisation – an ancient Dark Age.

During the 7th century BCE, the emergence of the Greek city-states did not herald a new nation. Rather, the city-states shared something of a common heritage rooted in conflict, alliance, empire and honour, but existed more or less independent of one another. At any given time, there were many 'Greek' city-states that fought among themselves and also as allies. As Greek civilisation flourished, colonies were established across the Mediterranean Basin, particularly in Asia Minor, North Africa, Sicily and Southern Italy.

The revival of trade and prosperity among the most prominent city-states fostered the development of military formations. The principal city-states of Athens, Sparta, Thebes, Corinth, Megara, Argos, Syracuse and others organised armies that would become the instruments of

decision in matters involving territorial disputes, trade domination, honour and even threats to freedom and independence. During the Archaic period, approximately 800 to 500 BCE, and the Classical period, 500 to 336 BCE, armies evolved from bands of armed warriors often led by an individual chieftain to militias of citizen soldiers under the control of the state, and then in some cases to standing, professional armies.

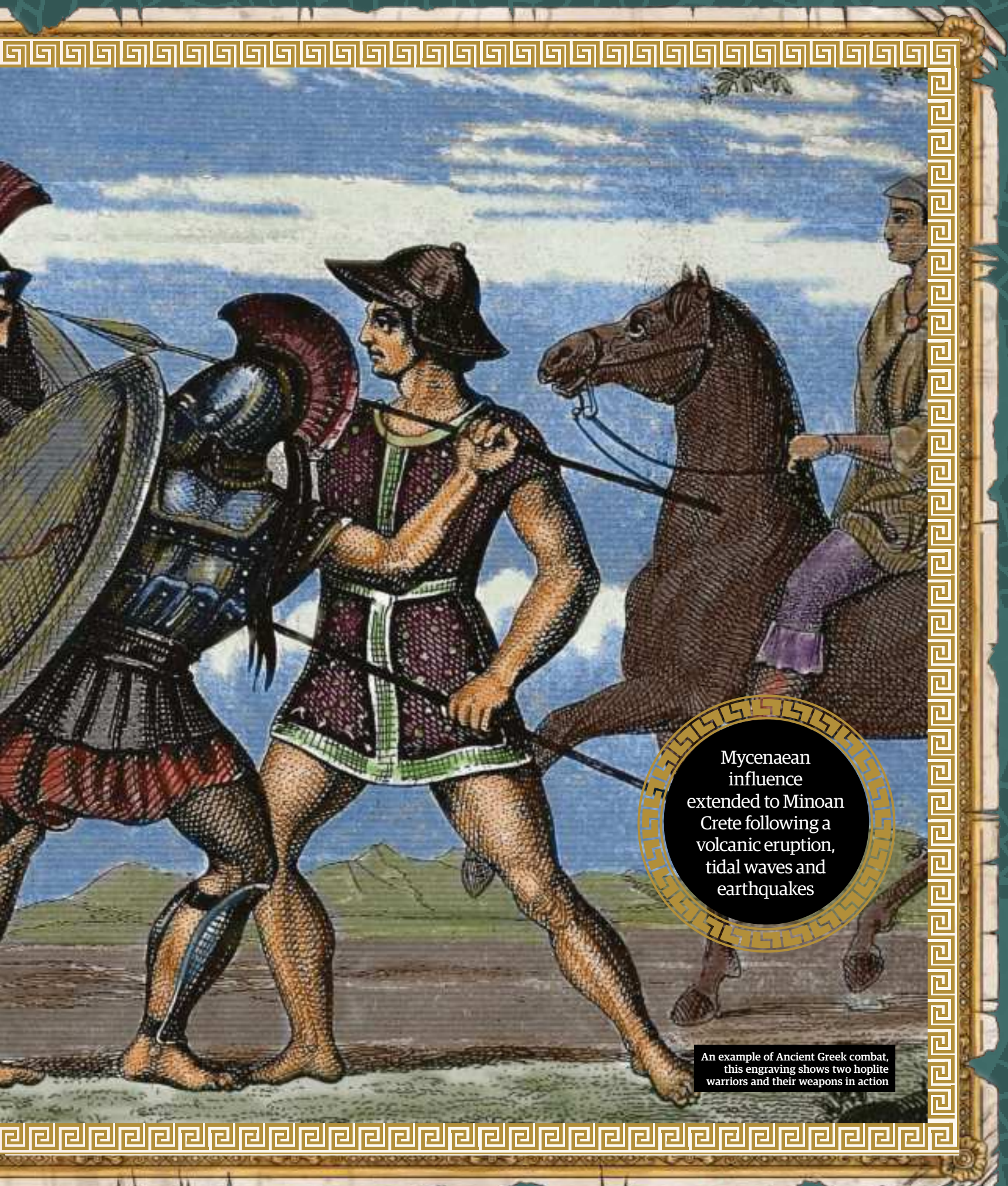
From the Archaic period forward, Greek armed forces fought in conflicts both large and small. These included the Persian invasion led by King Darius, which concluded with the decisive Greek victory at Marathon in 490 BCE; the Greek victory during the sea battle of Salamis; and the heroic stand at Thermopylae, which thwarted a second Persian invasion in 480 BCE; the Peloponnesian War from 431 to 404 BCE, which sapped the strength of the

city-states, but left Sparta preeminent; the Battle of Chaeronea in 338 BCE, which confirmed the ascendancy of King Philip II of Macedonia; and the wave of victories recorded by Alexander the Great. At the beginning of the Hellenistic period, around 300 BCE, Alexander's military ventures led to the conquest of much of the known world, from Egypt and the Mediterranean, right across Persia and the Indian subcontinent.

Seafaring city-states such as Rhodes, Corinth and Aegina built powerful navies, primarily of warships called triremes







Mycenaean influence extended to Minoan Crete following a volcanic eruption, tidal waves and earthquakes

An example of Ancient Greek combat, this engraving shows two hoplite warriors and their weapons in action





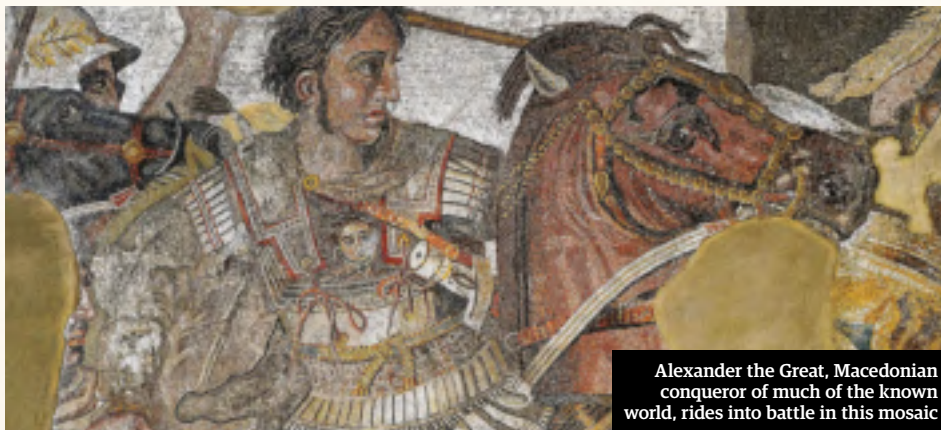
## The role of Spartan women

The Spartan commitment to military might was evident throughout the social structure of the city-state. Because their men were often away fulfilling their commitments to the army, women routinely ran the farms and households, directing slaves and supervising domestic operations. Spartan women were allowed to legally own property and inherit estates. They were also more educated than women of other Greek city-states. Some Spartan women amassed considerable wealth and influence within the Spartan government, drawing criticism from observers in other city-states that were dominated by men.

For women, raising children – particularly boys, who would one day populate the ranks of the Spartan army – was the highest duty. While free women in other city-states would have routinely performed certain household tasks, these were often considered beneath the dignity of Spartan women, and delegated to the slaves. Spartan women embraced their role in society and took great pride in their contribution to the militaristic culture. One Spartan mother sending her son off to war supposedly told him: “Come back either with your shield or on it!” In other words, only a coward would drop his shield and flee from combat. Death was preferable to the loss of Spartan honour.



A Spartan mother sends her son to war with the admonition to demonstrate courage or die in battle



Alexander the Great, Macedonian conqueror of much of the known world, rides into battle in this mosaic



Greek hoplites engage in phalanx fighting in this artist's interpretation that adorns a clay amphora

### ERA OF THE HOPLITE

The archetypal soldier of Ancient Greece was known as the hoplite, a warrior whose principal vocation was not in fact military. These men were citizens of the wealthy or upper-middle classes, merchants or landowners whose participation in the military was either a condition of citizenship or a matter of individual honour. In many cases, military service as a hoplite was reserved for the well-to-do, simply as a matter of cost. Soldiers were required to furnish their own arms and equipment.

The hoplite was typically equipped with at least 30 kilograms (66 pounds) of armour, including a chest plate called a cuirass that was strapped onto the body with leather thongs, a tall bronze helmet, and shin guards called greaves that protected the fronts of the legs. His primary protection was a heavy wooden shield called a hoplon that was covered with a bronze veneer. The shield weighed between eight and 15 kilograms (17 and

33 pounds), and though it might be considered unwieldy in battle, it was actually quite effective. The hoplite could rest a portion of the shield on his shoulder, and its design facilitated the development of the phalanx, the principal Ancient Greek fighting formation.

The primary hoplite weapon was an iron-tipped spear called a doru, extending a length of nearly three metres (nearly 10 feet). The shaft of the spear was wooden, and an iron spike was affixed to the butt. Called the sauroter, literally translated as ‘lizard killer’, the spike could be driven into the ground for a stout defence, or turned against the enemy during hand-to-hand combat. For close-in fighting, the hoplite was also armed with a secondary weapon, a short sword called a xiphos with a curved, double-edged, leaf-shaped blade about 65 centimetres (25.5 inches) long. The surissa, a longer spear extending up to five metres, was introduced with Macedonian troops under Alexander the Great during the 4th century BCE.

The primary fighting formation of the Greeks, the phalanx, was typically eight hoplites deep with a broad front that might include 100 or more men. The soldiers locked their shields together to present an armoured front, and thrust their spears forward. As phalanxes collided, the rear ranks exerted forward pressure. When one phalanx ruptured, its hoplites usually fled the field.

Ancient Greek armies also included cavalry contingents, although the cost of horses and armour again limited their numbers to the wealthy and noble. During the Peloponnesian War, cavalry began to play a more prominent role, but the phalanx remained the decisive formation on the battlefield. Light infantrymen called psiloi supported the hoplites. Armed with javelins, slings



and stones, they carried baggage while on the march. Archers were few in number.

Later, the Macedonian armies of King Philip II and Alexander the Great implemented cavalry more fully into battle tactics, recognising its value in scouting and reconnaissance, rapid envelopment of enemy flanks, and pursuit. The revised tactics initiated with the Macedonian army eventually ended the era of the hoplite.

## ATHENS AND SPARTA

Most Ancient Greeks regarded warfare as a necessary element of existence, and prepared their citizenry for any emerging threat. The primary city-states known to history are Athens and Sparta. Both committed to a strong military, but Sparta

is remembered for raising one of the earliest professional armies inculcated with martial spirit and unsurpassed courage. By the time of the second Persian invasion, Athenian politician and military commander Themistocles had advocated the building of 200 warships, or triremes. It was this strong Athenian navy that saved the day at Salamis. Military service in Athens was largely dictated by a man's social position and wealth. During the 6th century BCE, Solon - a prominent statesman and

lawmaker - instituted four social classes with direct bearing on the type of military service that an Athenian individual was expected to render. The lowest class, the thetes, served as oarsmen aboard the naval triremes, or as light infantry, while the zeugitai were financially able to outfit themselves as hoplites. Above these classes were the hippeis, those who could afford horses and therefore served as cavalry. The wealthiest class, the pentakosiomedimnoi, were military governors or high-level battlefield commanders.

In Sparta, military prowess pervaded society. Baby boys born with any type of deformity were typically abandoned to die, a practice that was also initially common in Athens. At the age of seven, boys left home for the agoge, the demanding military and educational training programme required of all Spartan males. The agoge is said to have included exercises in extreme physical fitness, stealth, proficiency with weapons, and the ability to read and write to facilitate battlefield operations. Those who completed the agoge prior to the age of 30 were considered full citizens of Sparta. Participation in the military was obligatory for men up to the age of 60.

The core of the Spartan army consisted of the Spartiates, full citizens who were given land grants in compensation for their service. The perioeci included non-citizens generally of working and merchant classes who served in light infantry and support roles during military campaigns. A third group, known as helots, consisted of men of the peasant or serf class who also served in the light infantry role.

## IN ALEXANDER'S WAKE

Following the death of Alexander the Great at the age of 32 in 323 BCE, the great territorial dominion of the Macedonians fractured. Alexander's close relatives administered the empire at first, however high-ranking military commanders then influenced the course of history. Ptolemy took

Spartan soldiers wore red capes into battle, so that bloodstains from wounds would not be readily apparent to others

The equipment of an Athenian warrior includes his large shield and the sword used as a secondary weapon



control in Egypt, Seleucus in Asia Minor and the Middle East, and Antigonos in Macedonia and much of Greece.

Meanwhile, the Roman Republic was emerging on the world stage, and beginning to exert influence over Greek colonies and settlements in Southern Italy. As Roman legions fought the Carthaginians under Hannibal in North Africa, King Philip V of Macedon offered support to Carthage. Angered at the gesture, the Romans embarked on a series of wars against the Macedonians, and by the middle of the 2nd century BCE, Greece had become a Roman province.

## The enigma of Homer

Some scholars doubt that blind poet Homer, author of the epic *Iliad* (a tale of the ten-year siege of Troy and the Greek victory in the Trojan War), along with *The Odyssey* (the story of the arduous journey of Odysseus, king of Ithaca, from Troy to his home in the Greek isles) actually even existed. Although there is agreement that the two monumental works, which also shaped the Ancient Greek perspective on the world, were written some time in the 7th or 8th century BCE, other aspects of their creation remain topics of lively debate.

Speculation on the life of Homer asserts that he was born in Ionia, a settlement in what is now Turkey. At the same time, some academics assert that the terms 'Homer' or 'Homeric' actually describe an era in Greek literature rather than an individual. Therefore, it follows that some observers believe Homer was truly a poet who lived and penned *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* on his own. Others say that both poems are the result of the contributions of more than one individual that matured over time. Regardless, the influence of both works resonated for many centuries in Ancient Greece, and is still very potent today.



Whether the blind poet Homer actually lived remains a topic of discussion among academic circles





# GREEK WARSHIPS

## Triremes – the ultimate fighting machines

First used in the 8th century BCE, the trireme was a state-of-the-art naval military machine. Fast and agile, triremes were designed to exert maximum power during military engagements. Its name was derived from its ability to seat three levels of rowers, who were positioned on both sides of the vessel.

Both the Greeks and the Phoenicians employed these ships for military and trading purposes, and they played an essential role in the Persian wars, becoming an important symbol of Athenian military capability. By the 5th century BCE, these ships came to dominate the eastern Mediterranean.

The crew consisted of 200 men, including rowers, a marine corp (comprising archers and spearmen) and a deck crew who were under the command of the helmsman.

Construction began with the hull. Later, the builders added wooden ribs in order to strengthen the vessel, these were reinforced with ropes that were fitted to the keel and stretched tightly over the timber. The ships were built with soft woods – namely pine and fir – while larch was employed for the interior of the vessel, the keel was made of oak.

Due to its design, the trireme was meant to undertake short, swift operations. At night, the ships

would pull into harbour where the crew would be able to collect fresh water and store it for the next stage of the journey.

Primary propulsion came from the oarsmen, with one man per oar. While the ship had two masts, its steering was controlled by two large paddles at the stern. It is believed the trireme could sail at six to eight knots; the distance it travelled depended on weather and manpower. In favourable conditions, it was thought that the oarsmen were able to propel the ship 80 or 96 kilometres (47 or 59 miles) in seven hours.

### Battle tactics

Athenian military operations depended on their close-quarters battle tactics, namely the ramming and boarding of enemy ships. The ram of the trireme was built at the front of the ship creating a large metal horn. When the ship attacked it would come in from the stern and attempt to rupture the hull of the enemy ship. A small number of marines were placed on the deck of the ship. They would defend or attack, attempting to board the enemy vessel armed with shields, spears and archery equipment. A squadron of triremes employed a wide range of battle tactics, these included a manoeuvre that was designed to outflank and encircle the enemy before attacking the rear of their ship.

A ram on show at the Israeli National Maritime Museum

#### The ram

The ram was made of copper or bronze and was designed to rupture enemy vessels.

#### The bow

The bow was decorated with an eye that was designed to repel evil spirits.

#### Ropes

Ropes were made of hemp or papyrus and were protected from humid conditions by being painted with several layers of tar.

#### Lookout

The *prôreus* was placed at the foredeck as a lookout.

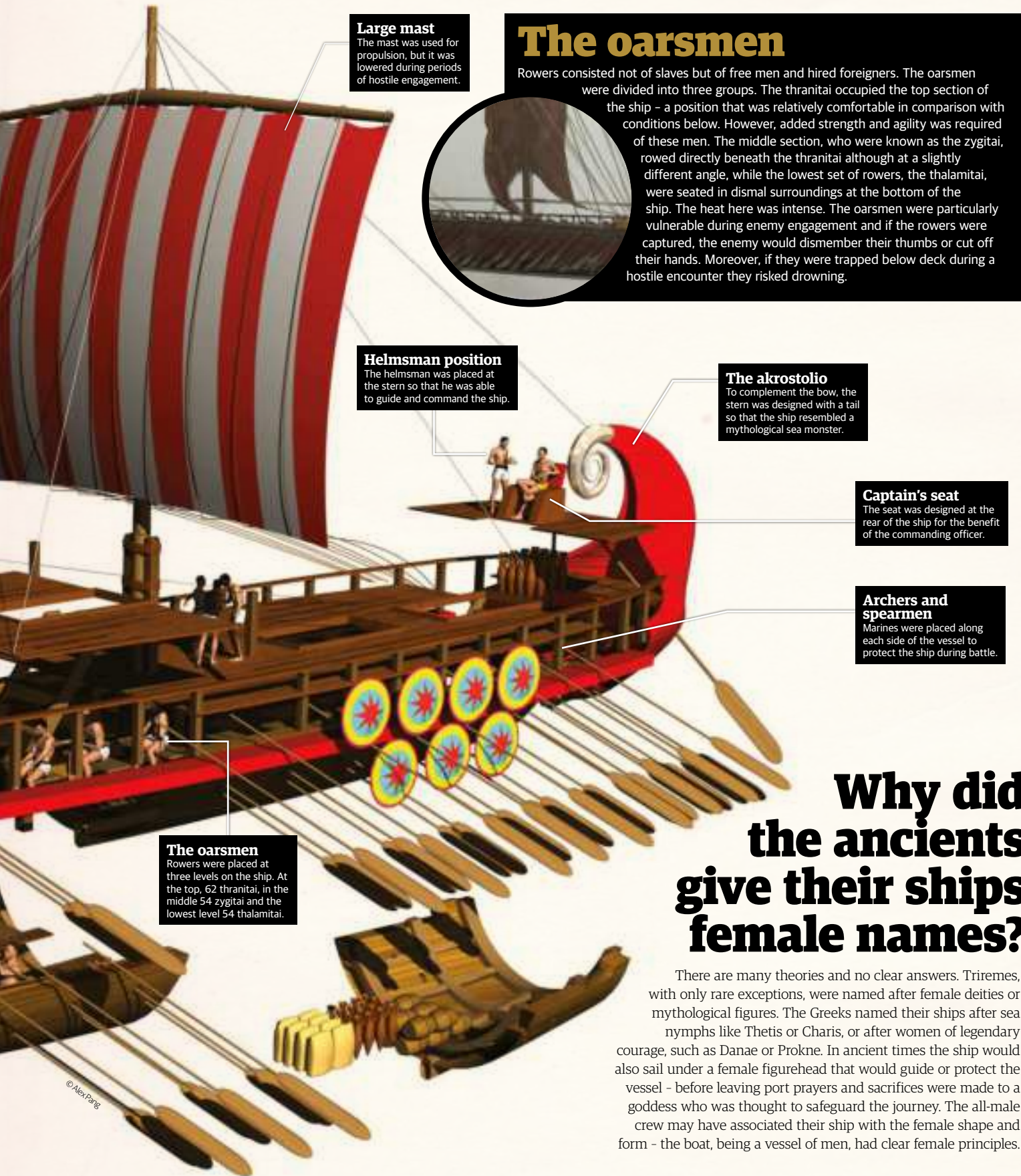
#### Storage

There wasn't much room to store large amounts of food or water, and therefore long journeys were kept to a minimum.

## Inside a trireme

The trireme was a long, narrow vessel highly unsuited for habitation. As a military ship, it was not designed for long journeys and there was no room for large stores of food or water. The ship was designed so the height of the hull rose only two metres (6.5 feet) above the water level, its draught was shallow and its keel was flat, allowing the crew to carry the ship to shore each night.





## Why did the ancients give their ships female names?

There are many theories and no clear answers. Triremes, with only rare exceptions, were named after female deities or mythological figures. The Greeks named their ships after sea nymphs like Thetis or Charis, or after women of legendary courage, such as Danae or Prokne. In ancient times the ship would also sail under a female figurehead that would guide or protect the vessel – before leaving port prayers and sacrifices were made to a goddess who was thought to safeguard the journey. The all-male crew may have associated their ship with the female shape and form – the boat, being a vessel of men, had clear female principles.



# WRITTEN IN BLOOD

The history of Greece played out in wars and battles that shaped the future of civilisation

## THE EARLY YEARS

The first distinctively Greek signs of culture developed on mainland Greece around about 1750 BCE and continued until about 1100 BCE. This is called the Mycenaean Period and it was characterised by a palace-based culture that rested upon a warrior society. Mycenaean Greeks also produced the first written Greek language, Linear B, which was deciphered by the independent scholar Michael Ventris in the 1950s. Their religion also featured some of the deities that appear in later worship. This period was identified in retrospect by the Greeks as their Heroic Age, when gods and mortals met, mated and fought, and Greek heroes sailed forth to lay siege to Troy. The men who fought before its walls, such as Achilles and Agamemnon, haunted the Greek imagination ever after, even though we don't know for sure that they existed.

The Mycenaean Period gave way, around about 1100 BCE, to the Greek Dark Ages. They are called 'dark' because, as in the later European Dark Ages, there is a paucity of historical records for the period. The Greek Dark Ages lasted until about 750 BCE. The start of these Dark Ages coincides with the Bronze-Age Collapse, when the civilisations of the eastern Mediterranean disintegrated and disappeared, such as Mycenaean Greece, Minoan Crete, the Hittites, or teetered on the brink before recovering, as in the case of Egypt. There are different theories as to the cause of this regional collapse, including the arrival of marauding invaders, the Sea Peoples, natural disasters and prolonged drought. Literacy was lost among the Greeks and they became a village-based people operating a near-subsistence economy.

Greek civilisation gradually recovered, entering the Archaic Age about 750 BCE. This was the time when the Greeks established their city-states and the previously oral tales of Troy were written down as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* and art and pottery began to take on a Greek flavour. The Archaic Age ended with the start of the Persian Wars.



Some 3,000 years after it was fought, the exploits of Achilles and the other heroes of the Trojan War still inspire

## THE SIEGE OF TROY

**BETWEEN 1275 AND 1180 BCE  
BELLIGERENTS: GREEK  
CONFEDERATION VS TROJANS**

The most important war ever recorded in the annals of Greek history may never have actually happened, and if it did, the people who fought in it might not even have been Greek. Even so, by about 750 BCE, the tale of the heroes who fought in the Trojan War had been written down and, in its putative

author, Homer, the Greeks found the muse who would inspire their culture into its golden age. We now know, thanks to the excavations of archaeologists starting with Heinrich Schliemann, that Troy was a real city. And in contrast to previous historians, most scholars today accept that the events of the Trojan War have some kernel of historical fact, although how big that nut is remains unclear. But when the oral tales of the war were codified to make the *Iliad*, the Greeks planted the wellspring of their culture in the soil of war: the *Iliad* made them a warrior people.

How the Mycenaean Greeks, who would have been the victors of the war, were actually related to the later Greeks who sang of their exploits is unclear: the later Greeks might have supplanted the earlier ones, contributing to the collapse of Mycenaean culture. But whatever the truth, the Greeks of the Archaic Age came to identify strongly with the heroes Homer sang about, even though they were developing a very different style of warfare.

The warfare of the *Iliad* is one of individual champions seeking each other out to fight in duels upon the battlefield. In contrast, the Greeks of the emerging city-states had started to deploy their forces in phalanxes, where maintaining the formation was everything: in this sort of warfare, there was no longer room for individual heroics. But the paradox that allowed the Greek way of war to conquer its enemies for the next few centuries was that the tales of Achilles and Ajax inspired the hoplites to the sort of courage necessary to stand unflinchingly in line next to their comrades, shield to shield, and advance upon the enemy. As such, the Trojan War, and the tales the Greeks told of it, was the most important war in Greek history.



## First Messenian War

743-724 BCE

**BELLIGERENTS:**

**SPARTA VS MESSENA**

The first war between the Spartans and the Messenians ended in disaster for the Messenians: they were defeated, their land was taken from them, and the Spartans permanently enslaved the survivors, making them the helots, the slave class upon which Spartan society depended.



According to some accounts, helots were subject to annual beatings by their Spartan masters to remind them of their servitude

## Second Messenian War

C.660-650 BCE

**BELLIGERENTS: SPARTA VS SPARTAN HELOTS**

About 70 years after their enslavement by the Spartans following the First Messenian War, the descendants of the enslaved Messenians, the Spartan helots, rose up in revolt against their masters. Although the helots had some success, the Spartans were able to eventually crush the revolt. The helots were enslaved again, remaining slaves of the Spartan state for 300 years. The fear of another revolt served to further militarise Spartan society, as well as producing such events as an annual hunt, where helots could be killed without fear of ritual impurity.



Aristomenes was the Messenian leader who led them during their second war against Sparta





## THE CLASSICAL AGE

These were the centuries of the Greek golden age, the years when Athens pioneered the world's first democratic state, when the playwrights such as Euripides and Sophocles wrote dramas that are still performed today, and Socrates, Plato and Aristotle laid the foundations of philosophy. They were years of wonder that raised the Acropolis over Athens and which saw the building of three of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. But the

Classical Age of Greece was born from the crucible of its defining struggle with the Persian Empire: it was a golden age bought in blood.

Its other theme was the struggle for hegemony over Greece, first in wars between Athens and Sparta and then the emergence of Thebes and finally Macedon as heirs to the exhausted combatants. When Philip II of Macedon brought Greece under his rule, he was ready to launch a counteroffensive against the enduring threat of the

Persian Empire, only for his assassination to stop his plans. But Philip's death put his 20-year-old son, Alexander, on the throne. With the army that his father had trained and honed, Alexander embarked on the most daring series of conquests seen in the ancient world, blazing a path of war across Asia, until his empire stretched from the Adriatic to the Indus. Alexander's star burned fierce but briefly; dead at 32, Alexander's passing marked the end of the Classical Age of Greece.

The burning of Sardis during the Ionian Revolt



## Ionian Revolt

499–493 BCE

**BELLIGERENTS: VARIOUS GREEK CITIES VS PERSIAN EMPIRE**

The Persian Empire, expanding into Asia Minor, had slowly begun to co-opt the Greek city-states there, imposing rulers upon them appointed by a Persian satrap (regional governor). One of those tyrants, Aristagoras, embarked on a joint Persian/Greek expedition to conquer Naxos, but when

it went disastrously wrong Aristagoras decided to foment rebellion among the Greeks rather than accept the possibly fatal demotion that the Persians would have imposed upon him.

The Greek revolt was initially successful but, faced with this unrest on his western frontier, the Persian leader, Darius the Great, assembled an army and put down the rebellion, imposing an equitable peace upon the defeated rebels. But this would prove the opening move in the era-defining conflict that was about to begin.

## Battle of Marathon

10 SEPTEMBER 490 BCE

**BELLIGERENTS: ATHENS VS PERSIAN EMPIRE**

Darius I, lord of an empire that stretched from Asia Minor and Egypt in the west to the River Indus in the east, was annoyed with the Greeks. Although he had suppressed the Ionian Revolt, Darius did not forget the part Athens had played in stirring up trouble. So he began to lay plans for the complete conquest of Greece.

In 490 BCE, the Persian army landed in the Bay of Marathon. The Athenians asked the Spartans, renowned as the best warriors in Greece, for help but the Spartans made their excuses, saying that they were in the middle of a religious festival and could not curtail it. So Greece's defence was left to the Athenians. Marching out from the city, they met the Persian army on a carefully chosen battlefield that prevented the Persians deploying their cavalry and completely routed the invaders, the defeated soldiers running back to their ships.

The story of the runner sent to Athens to tell of victory before promptly dropping dead from exhaustion was actually a later misunderstanding of the runners who had been sent to ask Sparta for help. The Battle of Marathon was the first time the Greeks had defeated the Persians. It revealed the potential of Greek hoplite formations against lightly armed warriors and instilled in the Greeks a profound sense of their own destiny.



Persian arrowheads excavated from the site of the Battle of Marathon



## Battle of Thermopylae

480 BCE

**BELLIGERENTS: SPARTA, THESPIAE AND THEBES VS PERSIAN EMPIRE**

The Battle of Thermopylae was actually a disaster for the Greeks. Determined to avenge his father's defeat, the new Persian ruler, Xerxes, had assembled a vast army. This time he was going to subjugate Greece. Leonidas and his 300 Spartans (plus other less celebrated contingents) attempted to block the army's route into Greece but were outflanked and Leonidas and all his elite warriors were killed, men hard to replace. It was only subsequent Greek victories that gave Thermopylae its lustre: wars are not won by defeats, however glorious.



Holding the narrow pass between mountains and sea, Leonidas and his men were able to resist the huge Persian army for two days

## Battle of Plataea

AUGUST 479 BCE

**BELLIGERENTS: GREEK CITY-STATES VS PERSIAN EMPIRE**

Although his navy had been defeated at the Battle of Salamis, Xerxes still had a large land army in Greece under the command of a general named Mardonius. The year after their victory at Salamis, the emboldened Greeks marched out to find and defeat the Persian army. The forces met at Plataea, with the Persians taking refuge in a fortified camp.

Unable to force entry, the Greek army began to pull back after 11 days, only for Mardonius to launch an ill-fated attack. The Greeks turned, killed Mardonius and sacked the Persian camp, destroying most of the Persian army. The second Persian invasion of Greece was over.

“Leonidas and all his elite warriors were killed”



The Battle of Plataea saw the destruction of the remaining Persian land forces in Greece

## Battle of Salamis

SEPTEMBER 480 BCE

**BELLIGERENTS: GREEK CITY-STATES VS PERSIAN EMPIRE**

The Battle of Salamis was the largest naval battle of the ancient world and resulted in a decisive Greek victory, forcing the Persian ruler, Xerxes, to withdraw his surviving ships from Greek waters. After Thermopylae, Xerxes' army had ravaged Greece, burning Athens and conquering up to the Isthmus of Corinth: only the Peloponnese remained under Greek control. Victory seemed assured, but a Greek commander named Themistocles hatched a plan. By luring the Persian fleet into the narrow waters of the Strait of Salamis, he enabled his outnumbered men to destroy the lighter Persian ships piecemeal by ramming them with their prows.



Greek triremes, propelled by three banks of rowers, could reach formidable speeds when ramming the enemy



## Battle of Leuctra

6 JULY 371 BCE

**BELLIGERENTS: THEBES VS SPARTA**

The Thebans, the leaders of the Boeotian League, took on the Spartans in a head-to-head ground battle and, for the first time in Greek history, the Spartans lost. The Thebans, led by Epaminondas, destroyed the Spartan army, inflicting heavy losses and bringing to an end Spartan hegemony over Greece. The victory led to a period of Theban dominance.



Epaminondas employed a new formation, reinforcing his left flank, to counter the traditional hoplite formation of the Spartans

## Battle of Chaeronea

2 AUGUST 338 BCE

**BELLIGERENTS: MACEDON AND ALLIES VS ATHENS, THEBES AND ALLIES**

In the unfashionable north of Greece, King Philip II of Macedon had been assembling and training his army in the use of new weapons and tactics: the five-metre- (16.5-foot-) long spear (the sarissa) and the massed phalanx required to wield it. The Macedonians had always been looked down on by the southern city-states but by 346 BCE, Philip had imposed his rule upon much of Greece, to the consternation of Thebes and Athens. The two cities entered into a league together and sought to throw off the yoke of Macedonian rule. Their armies met at Chaeronea and the result was a decisive victory for Philip. In the battle's aftermath, Philip was elected strategos (commander) for a new war against the Persian Empire to involve all the Greek states, but before he could begin the war he was assassinated. Command of the war effort passed to his son, a youth of 20 named Alexander.



A hugely capable king and general in his own right, the legacy of Philip II of Macedon will forever be overshadowed by that of his son

## The Wars of Alexander

336-323 BCE

**BELLIGERENTS: ALEXANDER VS THE WORLD**

He won them all. Alexander's war record was without blemish: he won every battle and war that he fought. Following his father's death, Alexander pacified his restless Greek allies, invaded and conquered the Persian Empire, and marched into India, only turning back when his men would go no further. By his death at the age of 32, he had conquered all the land he could reach and spread Greek language and culture throughout Asia Minor and the Near East.

Alexander left behind a world transformed, a world where Greek culture dominated the eastern Mediterranean and the Near East. That cultural domination would last until the rise of Islam in the 7th century CE.

**"He conquered all the land he could reach"**



No back-seat general. Alexander frequently fought in the front line of the battle



## A HELLENISED WORLD

The empire conquered by Alexander did not survive his death: it dissolved, via the struggles of competing generals, into a number of short-lived kingdoms. But the diffusion of Greek culture and language that the conquests of Alexander produced was much more long lasting. It created a Hellenised culture that endured

even after Greece was conquered by Rome and incorporated into its expanding territory. Indeed, so thoroughly had Greek culture permeated the eastern Mediterranean and Asia Minor that after the fall of the Western Roman Empire, its eastern half, based in Constantinople, continued for 1,000 years, calling itself Roman but speaking Greek. The Hellenised world began with Alexander's death in

323 BCE and officially ended with the defeat of the Greek armies by Rome at the Battle of Corinth in 146 BCE. However, other scholars date the end of this period to the death of Cleopatra, last scion of the inheritors of Alexander in 30 BCE, while Greek cultural influence continued in the region until the fall of Constantinople and the rise of the Ottoman Empire in 1453.

## Wars of the Diadochi

322-281 BCE

### BELLIGERENTS: THE SUCCESSORS OF ALEXANDER

Following Alexander's death in 323 BCE, there was no obvious successor to rule his vast empire. Alexander's son from Roxanne was yet to be

born. His half-brother, Arrhidaeus, was mentally disabled. So the empire dissolved into various factions under Alexander's most powerful generals. These successors, called the Diadochi, fought a complicated series of wars over 40 years that finally resolved into three major and two minor kingdoms. Of these, the most long lasting was the Ptolemaic dynasty founded by Ptolemy I Soter, which ruled Egypt until the death of Cleopatra in 30 BCE.



Mixing soldiers from all over Alexander's vast empire, the wars of the Diadochi featured exotic cavalry from the east



Through the long series of battles in the Macedonian Wars, the Roman Republic gradually broke the power of the Successor kingdoms

## Macedonian Wars

214-148 BCE

### BELLIGERENTS: ROMAN REPUBLIC VS GREEK STATES

The kingdoms of Alexander's successors, the Diadochi, met the rising power of the Roman Republic some three quarters of a century after the end of the Wars of the Diadochi. With the exception of Ptolemaic Egypt, the Roman Republic shattered all of the successor kingdoms.

By the end of these wars, the Roman army had definitively proved its superiority over the Macedonian phalanx, even bringing the birthplace of Alexander, Macedon, under its control. Only southern Greece remained outside the expanding empire.

## Battle of Corinth

146 BCE

### BELLIGERENTS: ACHAEAN LEAGUE VS ROMAN REPUBLIC

Alarmed at the growing might of the Roman Republic, those Greek city-states that remained independent formed a league for mutual defence, attempting to combine independent political power with shared military defence. In 146 BCE, the Romans marched on Corinth and the decisive battle took place outside the city. The Greeks, after initially holding back the Roman legions, were defeated. The Greek strategos fled and then committed suicide. After three days the Romans entered Corinth, sacked the city and enslaved its inhabitants. Greece was now ruled from Rome.



The Roman legion proved, during the course of the wars between the Greek city-states and the Republic, to be a more flexible and effective fighting formation than the Greek phalanx





# ANCIENT GREECE IN ECLIPSE

Numerous factors conspired to bring the glory of Greece to subjugation by the Roman Republic during the 2nd century BCE

**B**y 323 BCE, Alexander the Great, son of the iconic King Philip II of Macedonia, had conquered most of the known world. Aged only in his early 30s, he had led armies to victory from the Eastern Mediterranean to the valley of the Indus River – and he was now on his deathbed. Both Alexander's exact age and his cause of death are unknown, but scholars speculate that wounds received in a battle in India had become infected, spreading toxin throughout his body. Regardless of the cause, Alexander was to become as influential in death as he had been in life. With its leader gone, the vast empire won through conquest might well descend into chaos, and slip into history almost as swiftly as it had been won.

As Alexander's life ebbed, his generals gathered around, bent close, and asked which of them should inherit the mantle of power. Alexander is believed to have whispered: "The fittest" or "the strongest."

The death of Alexander is a watershed in the history of the Western world, not simply because of his prowess as a military commander and conqueror, his youth, or the aura of invincibility that surrounds the mere utterance of his name to this day, but also because it ushered in

generations of conflict and rivalry among his lieutenants that hastened the demise of Classical Greece. The rise of Hellenistic Greece that followed in Alexander's turbulent wake is only part of the story of that demise.

## SEEDS OF DISCORD

Long before the ascendance of Alexander, the city-states of Greece were building, stone by stone, the road to ruinous discord and their own subjugation. As with great civilisations before and since, Classical Greece was as much a victim of its own evolution, infighting, ambitions and prosperity as any external forces that came to bear. Through the centuries, numerous circumstances arose, matured and metastasised, eventually resulting in the absorption of Greek territory by the Rome. Although they shared a

common language, banded together to defeat the invading Persians in the early 5th century, and worshipped the same pantheon of gods, the city-states of Greece were for the most part politically, militarily and economically independent of one another. This condition was fostered in part due to geography. Mountains divided lands, and those who settled along the Aegean Sea were drawn to a maritime existence.

The Library of Alexandria, a trove of manuscripts, was constructed in the 3rd century BCE, but later destroyed by fire





The Greek language remained in common use in the eastern Roman Empire for centuries after the Roman conquest of Greece

In this 18th-century painting by artist Placido Costanzi, Alexander the Great is depicted founding the city of Alexandria, Egypt





## Battle of Chaeronea

Although it has languished historically in the shadow of Thermopylae, Marathon and Salamis, the Battle of Chaeronea, fought in 338 BCE, was one of the most significant in the history of Ancient Greece, and indeed the Western world.

King Philip II of Macedonia had fostered a tentative peace among the city-states, but also proclaimed Macedonian hegemony over much of Greece. In response, Athens, Thebes and several other city-states rose against the Macedonians, intent on preserving their independence.

Philip led his strong Macedonian army southward, intent on crushing the threat to his assertion of power. A stalemate of several months ensued, but Philip then marched into Boeotia and prepared to advance on both Athens and Thebes. As the Macedonians proceeded, the army of the Greek alliance, roughly the same size as Philip's force, assembled to fight and blocked the road. While few details of the actual battle are known, it is recorded that Philip succeeded in crushing both flanks of the opposing army, putting his enemies to flight.

With Athens and Thebes defeated, the Macedonian victory at Chaeronea assured Philip's domination of Greece, led to the formation of the Corinthian League, and ultimately enabled Alexander the Great to launch his epic conquests.



This funerary relief sculpture honoured Pancahres, an Athenian soldier who is thought to have died during the Battle of Chaeronea



This bust of Ptolemy I Soter depicts the former lieutenant of Alexander the Great as a pharaoh of Egypt



The hypaspist, or shield bearer, was considered the elite of the ancient Macedonian army that fought for King Philip and Alexander

While the flowering of culture, particularly in Athens, was tremendous, militarism became a way of life in Sparta, and other city-states such as Thebes and Corinth sought their due. Culture, power, trade and independent thought brought about jealousies, rivalries and distrust.

Through centuries of colonisation, Greek culture had spread across the Mediterranean and into Asia Minor. However, while the people of these colonies embraced the culture, they were not always loyal to their parent city-state. Often, they began to consider themselves independent, protective of their own interests and identities. Therefore, what little sense of Greek commonality or community may have existed at one time eroded in due course.

### HAVES AND HAVE NOTS

As the Greek city-states accumulated tremendous wealth through trade, tribute payments from vassals, and the exploitation of resources, inevitably a stratification of social classes emerged. But the poor and common citizens began to grow disgruntled with the growing prosperity of the elite, aristocratic class above them. In some

city-states, this displeasure sometimes erupted in civil strife.

At the same time, the city-states were continually at war with one another or with external powers, such as Persia, bent on territorial gains or the extension of influence. The seemingly never-ending waging of war proved to be an

expensive undertaking in Greece, which drained the treasure, manpower and eventually the tremendous prosperity of the city-states.

Intrigue, negotiation and self-interest led to ever-shifting alliances. By 431 BCE, the cataclysmic Peloponnesian War had begun. 27 years of fighting, Greek versus Greek, outside interference, starvation and death left Sparta preeminent among the city-states, its arch rival Athens reduced to a second-rate power

after expending its great wealth in the long and destructive conflict.

Although militarily victorious, Sparta was also seriously weakened by the Peloponnesian War. Consequently, the Spartans were never really able to consolidate their long-sought hegemony. Sparta's principal allies, Corinth and Thebes, were weakened as well.

Of Macedonian lineage, Cleopatra, legendary queen of Egypt bore the children of both Mark Antony and Julius Caesar



## "Alexander's ambitions proved many times greater than those of his father"

The real victor of the Peloponnesian War was Persia, which had provided military support to Sparta and its Peloponnesian League, enabling the Spartans to construct a navy that could defeat the Athenians - perennially the strongest naval power in the Eastern Mediterranean - at the decisive Battle of Aegospotami in 405 BCE. Persia regained control of territories in Ionia, and benefitted from the deterioration of Greek military and economic power during the late 5th century BCE.

From the beginning, it was apparent that Sparta was capable of exerting little actual control over the other city-states, and in due course a challenge developed as Thebes, Corinth, Argos and a resurgent Athens sought greater autonomy. The so-called Corinthian War erupted in 395 BCE, and wore on for eight years. Only the threat of renewed Persian intervention on the side of the Spartans could quell the conflict and return the relations between the city-states to their prewar status quo.

16 years later, Sparta was again confronted with rebellion, principally by its former ally, Thebes. Epaminondas, a highly capable commander, led the Theban army to victory against the Spartans at Leuctra in 371 BCE, and marched into the Peloponnesian peninsula. Other city-states fell away from Sparta, joining the insurrection as Epaminondas reached the Aegean Sea.

Sparta rapidly declined, as its once-mighty army could no longer be sustained to the extent required of a first-rate power. Thebes gained preeminence,

but its days at the pinnacle of the Greek world were numbered. In 362 BCE, Greek fratricide erupted once again, as Thebes and its allies fought Sparta, Athens and a collection of the other city-states known as the Mantinea League. The Battle of Mantinea ended in a tactical Theban victory, but Epaminondas and a number of his senior lieutenants were killed, while the Spartans and Athenians also suffered serious losses.

The Battle of Mantinea resulted in a strategic defeat for both sides, while a tremendous storm was brewing in the north.

### OPPORTUNISM AND EXPANSION

Macedonia, a mountainous region north of the Peloponnese, had long felt the influence of Greek culture. However, the loyalties of its people were divided among clans and chieftains, none of whom had shown the leadership or real inclination to build a unified state, fully taking advantage of tremendous natural resources, and possibly even becoming a rival of Athens and Sparta.

When Philip II gained the throne of Macedonia in 359 BCE, the fortunes of the once-backward kingdom began to change. As a young man, Philip had observed the fighting techniques and operations of the Theban army. He subsequently used his military and diplomatic skills to gradually assert greater control over the warlords and minor nobility of Macedonia's mountainous interior. In time, Philip managed to amass an army of

A coin bears the likeness of Seleucus I Nicator, founder of the Seleucid Empire and former lieutenant of Alexander the Great



up to 40,000 infantry and cavalry, a loyal, well-disciplined force.

Nearly 20 years after his rise to power in Macedonia, Philip and his powerful army struck southward in a campaign of conquest. In 338 BCE, the Macedonians defeated the armies of the Greek Confederation, principally Athens, Thebes and Corinth, at the Battle of Chaeronea. The victory brought Macedonian hegemony over the principal city-states, with the exception of a defiant Sparta.

Philip compelled most of the city-states to join the Corinthian League, which he intended not only to be a deterrent to future Persian aggression, but also as a punitive tool. Rather than fighting one another, the city-states of the Corinthian League would focus on the perennial Persian threat, and in 336 BCE, Philip announced an expedition against Persia in retribution for all the interference, pain and suffering the enemy empire had inflicted on the Greeks for so many years.

Just prior to the anticipated march against Persia, one of Philip's daughters was married. Amid the feast and merrymaking that followed, Philip was stabbed to death by one of his own bodyguards. The king's 20-year-old son, Alexander, ascended the throne of Macedonia, and for a while the rival commanders in Philip's army hoped that they could control the young monarch. They were shocked, however, at the boy king's command presence and his determination not only to continue Philip's direct military opposition to Persia, but also to extend Greek dominion to its absolute limit.

Alexander's ambitions proved many times greater than those of his father. For 11 years, from 334 to 323 BCE, his army of Macedonians and men of other Greek lands conquered the Persian Empire, advanced eastward to India and southward to Egypt, and expanded Alexander's dominion throughout much of the known world. Meanwhile, Sparta was finally compelled to join the Corinthian



These extensive ruins, including a once-crowded street, attest to the level of civilisation achieved in ancient Corinth





League after a Macedonian army, led by Antipater, defeated Spartan forces under King Agis III at the Battle of Megalopolis in 331 BCE.

Alexander's untimely death left a power vacuum that resulted in years of conflict, and eventually paved the way for the Roman conquest of Greece. By the late 3rd century BCE, intrigue and posturing had petered out. Alexander's rival lieutenants had come to realise virtually to a man that no individual could control all of the vast empire which Alexander had won at the point of the sword. By 281 BCE, the result was the fragmentation of Alexander's domain into four large territories.

## SUCCESSOR STATES

One of Alexander's generals, Seleucus I Nicator, who campaigned with the great conqueror all the way to India, established a territory in 303 BCE known as Seleucid Greece with its capital at Antioch, in present-day Turkey. The realm consisted primarily of Syrian territory, and also included Mesopotamia. The Seleucids colonised other areas of the Mediterranean, and their cities were noted for artisans who produced commodities including tapestries, cloth dyed a rich purple hue, perfumes and quality pottery.

The Seleucids were largely responsible for exporting the Greek culture across the

## "Alexander's untimely death left a power vacuum that eventually paved the way for the Roman conquest of Greece"

Mediterranean to areas that were not traditionally Greek. They founded numerous settlements and came to be known as a highly diverse citizenry, including Jewish, Phoenician, Persian and other ethnicities. That diversity, along with disputes among competing dynastic rulers, is partially to blame for the unrest that ebbed and flowed across the region for more than a century.

Among the youngest senior commanders in Alexander's army, Ptolemy I Soter came to power in Egypt, with his capital at Alexandria, in 305 BCE. Perhaps the most successful of the successor states spawned by Alexander's conquests, Ptolemaic Egypt was a centre of agriculture, as the cultivation of the fertile delta of the River Nile produced tremendous harvests of grain.

Eventually, Ptolemaic Greece and neighbouring Rhodes gained monopolies on the export of grain and fine wine from the Mediterranean to the Black Sea, while explorers from the region learned the tendencies of the weather, and took advantage of monsoon winds to open a profitable seasonal trade

protocol with the rich kingdoms of Arabia and the Indian subcontinent. Alexandria eclipsed Athens as the preeminent city of the Greek world, and by the time of the Roman conquest of Greece in the 1st century BCE, the metropolis boasted a population of approximately one million.

By the 3rd century BCE, Ptolemaic Greece was recognised as a strong naval power. However, continuing disputes with the neighbouring Seleucids and squabbles among the successors to the first Ptolemy brought the region into decline within 150 years of its founding.

In 279 BCE, Macedonia itself came under the control of Antigonus Gonatas, the grandson of one of Alexander's most trusted subordinates. Under Antigonus, Macedonia may have been perceived as somewhat backward, while the Seleucids and Ptolemaic Greeks spread their Hellenistic influence throughout the Mediterranean. On closer inspection, however, it has been concluded that the Macedonians, somewhat isolated in the mountains of northern Greece, exploited their resources of

The Colossus of Rhodes, which stood 33 metres (108 feet) tall at the harbour entrance, was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World

This 1884 painting by Lawrence Alma-Tadema depicts Cleopatra, Ptolemaic queen of Egypt, and her lover, Roman soldier and statesman Mark Antony



timber and silver in lucrative trade, and became quite prosperous.

Macedonia remained the centre of Greek military prowess, and Antigonos invaded Laconia. Under the aggressive leadership of King Philip V from 220 to 180 BCE, expeditions were undertaken against the Peloponnese, Ionia and the wealthy city of Pergamon in Asia Minor. The Macedonians fought the Romans three times during the 2nd century BCE, once forming an alliance with Carthaginian King Hannibal, who invaded Greece and laid siege to Athens.

Centred at Pergamon, Attalid Greece was founded by Philetairos, the secretary to yet another of Alexander's generals, Lysimachus. When Lysimachus was killed in battle against the Seleucids, Philetairos withdrew with the funds that remained in his former employer's coffers, and organised the forces around him to repulse an invasion of western Anatolia by the Gauls in 270 BCE. Philetairos grew in stature, and the people of

the Greek cities along coastal Anatolia hailed him as a hero.

When Philetairos died in 263 BCE, he was succeeded by his nephew, Eumenes I, the son of Philetairos's brother, Attalus I. Eumenes had three brothers, and rather than fighting among themselves, the siblings chose to cooperate, ruling successively. By 190 BCE, the Attalids dominated the west coast of Anatolia and much of mountainous Phrygia, a region of the interior of present-day Turkey. The Attalids competed with the other successor states economically, and became known for their fine tapestries and pottery. They traded with Eastern realms via an overland road across Anatolia. They also maintained good diplomatic relations with Rome, helping to ensure their prosperity.

Traditional Greek city-states organised into the Aetolian League in the central Peloponnese and into the rival Achaean League, although Athens, Sparta and Rhodes managed to remain somewhat independent after the death of Alexander. Their influence in broader affairs, however, had waned substantially. With the advent of Roman rule, life in Athens - renowned as a centre of education - and Sparta - legendary for its unique society - was allowed to continue with little interference.

## Roman Athens and Sparta

Following their conquest of Greece, the Romans gave Athens the status of a free city, largely due to their immense respect for the educational opportunities afforded in the city's numerous schools. The Romans also admired Greek culture, including its architectural wonders. Construction on one of these located in Athens, the Temple of Olympian Zeus, was actually begun in the 6th century BCE, and completed during the reign of Roman emperor Hadrian in the 2nd century CE, more than 600 years later. Hadrian visited Athens in 124 CE, and returned to dedicate the temple in 132. Meanwhile, he also authorised the construction of numerous other buildings and an aqueduct. The grateful people of Athens erected a statue to honour the Roman emperor.

During the Punic Wars against Hannibal and the Carthaginians, Sparta allied with Rome, but its later defeat at the hands of a Roman-led coalition in the Laconian War relegated it to the status of a second-rate power. Like the Athenians, Spartan citizens continued with their own way of life while under Roman rule. It is said that wealthy Romans actually travelled to Sparta to observe some of the foreign customs that were in practice there, making the city an early tourist attraction.



The ruins of the Temple of Olympian Zeus in Athens include 16 surviving Corinthian columns

### THE ROMAN REACH

The eastward expansion of its empire inevitably brought Rome into contact with the flourishing cities and colonies either founded by the Greeks or influenced by Greek immigration. First, the Romans encroached on the settlements on the Italian mainland. Eventually, they reached the states of Hellenistic Greece.

In 195 BCE, a coalition of Rome, Macedonia, the Achaean and Aetolian Leagues, Pergamon and Rhodes defeated Sparta in the Laconian War, forcing the Spartans to join the Achaean League, and ending the once-dominant city-state's long tenure as a major power in Greece.

The hegemony of the Roman Republic over the Greek peninsula was effectively won on the battlefield in 146 BCE, when the legions of Lucius Mummius Achaicus defeated Corinth and the allied Achaean League. In the aftermath of the Battle of Corinth - sometimes known as the Battle of Lefkopetra - the city itself was utterly destroyed. The alliance of King Philip V with Hannibal during the Punic Wars contributed to the downfall of Macedonia. About the time of the demise of Corinth, Macedonia's status was diminished to that of the first Roman province in the Aegean world.



This artist's impression of the Colossus of Rhodes, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, dates to the 1880s

King Attalus III bequeathed the wealth of Attalid Pergamon to the Roman Republic in his will in order to prevent divisive feuding that might otherwise have erupted after his demise. When he died in 133 BCE, Roman troops solidified the gain, and the territories of Pergamon became the Roman province of Asia, one of the wealthiest under Roman control.

A century of infighting had completely torn the Seleucid dynasty apart by 140 BCE, and while the Romans considered the Seleucids a military threat for several decades, it was not until 66 BCE

that Pompey the Great brought the remains of Seleucid Syria into the Roman fold. The last ruler of Ptolemaic Egypt, the famed Cleopatra, manipulated relationships with Julius Caesar and Mark Antony in order to maintain influence with Rome. Her illusion was completely shattered when Octavian's (soon to be known as Emperor Augustus) fleet destroyed Antony and Cleopatra's navy at the Battle of Actium in 31 BCE. Egypt subsequently became a Roman possession.

With the death of Cleopatra in 30 BCE, the last of the great ruling dynasties of the Eastern Mediterranean spawned by Macedonian expansion came to an end. Greek influence, however, remained very much alive, shaping Roman culture and subsequently the broader Western world view ever since.

The Romans embraced aspects of Greek culture, adopting many Greek gods, myths and religious practices as their own





# 10 WAYS ANCIENT GREECE CHANGED THE WORLD

Spread across the Mediterranean Sea in more than a thousand small city-states, the secret of the Ancient Greeks' greatness lay in their extraordinary ambition and competitiveness





## Warfare

No one had ever fought like the Greeks, and no one had ever won like Alexander the Great

**10** The Greeks are often credited with inventing the 'Western way of war', fighting pitched battles on foot at fixed locations until one side was defeated. This may seem ordinary enough now, but in earlier periods and other parts of the world fighting was more tentative and less bloody, more reliant on missiles, manoeuvres and displays of force. Troops were also deployed much more loosely in non-Greek armies, fighting as individuals, not a unit. Although the Greeks used cavalry and lightly armed soldiers with javelins and the like for skirmishing, the essence of Greek warfare lay in heavily armed and armoured infantry in close formation, fighting hand-to-hand to the death. This style of fighting brought a new intensity and deadliness to battles. Once it had proven decisive in international warfare, most notably against the Persians and their huge multinational armies, things would never be the same again.

The basis for this was the hoplite soldier, named after the type of shield used. Hoplites were equipped with a bronze helmet, a leather or bronze breastplate, bronze greaves on their shins, a large circular shield (the 'hoplon') made from leather or wood faced with bronze, a long spear made from ash and tipped with an iron or bronze blade, and a short sword, also made from iron or bronze. The armour and weapons were physically demanding for the soldiers, requiring extreme fitness.

Hoplites were also highly disciplined. They faced the enemy shoulder to shoulder in the famous phalanx formation, each man covering his companion to the left with his shield and relying on his right-hand neighbour to do the same for him. The line would always creep to the right as each soldier tried to maximise his shield protection. Each rank of the phalanx would normally be at least eight-men deep, making the pressure from the hoplite line positively fearsome.

## Phalanx tactics

The first impact and spear blows are followed by pressure from the rear ranks pushing forward, trying to drive holes in the enemy formation.

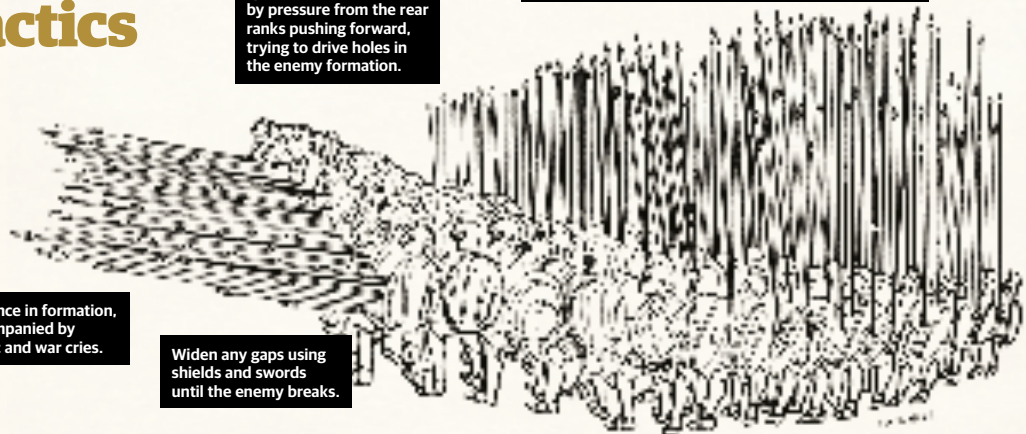
The sheer physical force and bone-crushing proximity of the phalanx made it terrifying to non-Greeks who weren't used to it. Strength was in numbers.

Advance in formation, accompanied by music and war cries.

Widen any gaps using shields and swords until the enemy breaks.



The Greeks' new and extremely disciplined approach to warfare made them a world power







## Architecture

We can see the influence of the Greeks in cities around the globe - our world would literally not look the same without them

**09** We all know that the Greeks were responsible for some of the most famous structures ever built - just think of the buildings on the Acropolis in Athens. Five of the seven ancient wonders of the world were built by this small group of people clustered around the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. This in itself is a remarkable achievement by any standard.

However, these individual buildings, statues, theatres and stadiums are a relatively trivial part of their architectural legacy. What really mattered was their influence. The Greeks effectively invented Western architecture. Building on eastern foundations, the Greeks built up their own distinct style of public buildings, inventing some types along the way, including theatres and stadiums. They established the principles of a working architectural theory and practice, and made architecture into both an art and a science. It was the influence of this approach - together with their distinctive aesthetic - that was to be so influential.

The mark of Greece on Roman architecture is especially obvious, but to this day it is impossible to study architecture without considering the Greek legacy. And all we have to do is look around us to see how Ancient Greek architecture changed our world.

### Public space

The original Acropolis buildings were destroyed by the Persians in 480 BCE and the new buildings were a statement of civic pride. The Acropolis was a public space, built by and for the Athenian people. In other cultures, monuments like this had been reserved for kings and emperors.

The Parthenon temple of the goddess Athena on the Athenian Acropolis (built 447-438 BCE) was vast and built entirely from marble - 22,000 tons of it. Nothing quite like it had been seen before

### The pediment

The pediment housed huge painted sculptures telling the story of the goddess Athena. The statues represent a key part of Athenian civic culture. The pediment itself is larger than normal because of the unusually large number of columns.

### The metopes

The metopes were horizontal rectangular panels and the Parthenon's were, of course, huge. Displayed on them were scenes from mythic battles showing Greek triumphs - this was especially significant to emphasise the perceived superiority to Persians.





## Politics

Before the Greeks, politics was just something people did. They made it something people thought about

**08** Politics is a Greek word meaning 'affairs of the polis' - polis meant 'city' or 'state'. Democracy, oligarchy, monarchy and tyranny are just some of the many other terms we have taken from them. They were probably the first civilisation to really think about politics. Unlike their contemporaries, they analysed different systems; they didn't assume that their own way was the only way, even if they often thought it was the best. It was this critical thinking that was probably their greatest

legacy, even more than their dramatic experiments with democracy at one end and extreme social control at the other.

In the 5th century BCE, the Greek world became increasingly divided, culminating in the Peloponnesian War (431-404 BCE) in which Athens and their allies fought against Sparta and their allies. Broadly speaking, the Athenians were pro-democracy, while the Spartans favoured oligarchy - rule by an elite. While this was in some ways a straightforward power struggle, a contest between two powerful states to dominate the Greek world, it was also one of the first ideological wars. It wasn't just a conflict between states; it was a conflict of ideals. The Spartans won and forced the Athenians to abolish

democracy in favour of oligarchy, although this didn't last and popular rule was restored.

Out-and-out monarchy was rare in Greece in the Classical period, mostly confined to border states like Macedonia. However, the future lay with the Macedonian kings, such as Alexander the Great - until these polar ideas of democracy and totalitarian rule resurfaced thousands of years later, defining large parts of the 20th century.

### Doric order columns

The columns are in the traditional 'Doric order' style. However, there are eight in front and 17 down the side, rather than the usual six and 13, while new 'Ionian order' features (such as an elaborate frieze) are behind.



Pericles (c.495-429 BCE) was a leading statesman of Athenian democracy

## Sparta vs Athens

Spartan citizens could vote on proposals made by their council of elders, but they could not choose what to vote on or debate. They voted by shouting. They also voted for their chief magistrates, the 'ephors', every year. The ephors served alongside two hereditary kings in a complex political set-up.

### VOTING

In the period of full democracy in Athens, all officials were elected or chosen through a lottery, much like today's jury service, where any free citizen could be chosen to serve for a set amount of time. Even generals were elected. Citizens could debate all public policy and propose motions for debate.

Sparta was a land power and was largely closed to the outside world. Trade was insignificant and it only had a small navy and no merchant fleet. Precious few outsiders were welcome in Sparta, and they could only live there by official invitation, which was extremely rare.

### FOREIGN POLICY

Athens was a sea power with a thriving international trade, a powerful navy and a large body of non-Athenian residents - merchants, artisans, scholars and artists. Unlike Sparta, Athens was dependent on trade, especially grain imports, for its survival and prosperity.

Although Spartan women were not full citizens in the sense that men were, they were famous in Ancient Greece for their freedom and public visibility. They were known as 'thigh showers' because of their short tunics, and they scandalised non-Spartans with their public dancing and sexual freedom.

### WOMEN

Women had few rights. Courtesans might behave with more freedom, but 'respectable' women were expected to be neither seen nor heard outside the home. Practice may have been more liberal than theory, however: one Greek comedy has women going on a 'sex strike' to force the men to make peace with Sparta.

In English, the word 'spartan' means 'austere, without comfort', and it's no surprise that Classical Sparta was a simple and basic city in every sense of the word. There was no ostentatious public architecture, and there weren't even city walls - the city's walls were its men, the Spartans said.

### PUBLIC SPACES

The public buildings of Athens, especially on the Acropolis, were a marvel of the ancient world, setting new standards of magnificence and innovation. The impressive public spaces were heaving with activity. The city itself and the neighbouring harbour, the Piraeus, were enclosed within near-unbreachable walls.

'Laconic', meaning 'using few words' in English, comes from 'Laconia', another word for Sparta. Spartans were famed for their wit. After a disastrous sea battle, a Spartan sent one of the most laconic war despatches ever: "Ships gone; Mindarus [the admiral] dead; the men starving; at our wits' end what to do."

### ELOQUENCE

Training in public speaking was an important part of a well-to-do Athenian's education. One of the most famous orators of all time, Demosthenes, was an Athenian, though it should be said he was also famous for warning against the Macedonians in speech after speech - and being ignored until it was too late.





## Medicine

"First do no harm," said Hippocrates. He didn't do a great deal of good to his patients either, but he did lay the foundations for future medicine

**07** The Greek contribution to scientific medicine was huge. While even the best of their doctors couldn't cure many illnesses and they were proven wrong in many of their speculations, their ethos and method were the foundation for later developments and still live on today.

While supernatural diagnoses and religious and magical cures continued alongside the new rational medicine of Hippocrates in the 5th and 4th centuries BCE, this was a significant stage in the history of medicine; perhaps the single largest shift in medical thinking there has been.

The new wave of physicians said that illness had purely natural causes, coming from within the body and the physical environment; it was not a curse from gods or witches. They developed a method of close observation to study individual diseases, identifying them and beginning to catalogue their symptoms.

Hippocrates in particular insisted on a selfless and compassionate duty of care to patients. The principles and methods were now in place to advance medical knowledge and care, even if treatment was often ineffective without today's knowledge of physiology.



A Greek physician sees to a patient



The snake and staff were a symbol of Asclepius, the Greek god of medicine

## Hippocrates

Hippocrates believed most illnesses were caused by the body's natural balance being disrupted and that the role of the physician was to help nature restore it. Unfortunately, his ideas of physiology were hopelessly wrong. He thought the balance was between four 'humours': blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile.



### Purgatives and bloodletting

If the humours were unbalanced by 'too much' blood or bile, then the patient might be bled or given a laxative or emetic.

### Diet and exercise

Regular exercise, bathing in the sea and avoiding overeating were all recommended to help avoid illness. During illness, a light or liquid diet would be prescribed.

### Quiet and rest

Patients should not be disturbed and should rest to help conserve and restore their strength.

**Art** Perfection of form and realism of presentation made Greek art stand out. Have their sculptures ever been bettered?

**06** Sculpture and painting were without doubt the greatest of the Greek visual arts, especially sculpture. The distinctive characteristics were a concentration on the human form rather than landscapes or strange and inhuman figures - such as gods, monsters or demons; a focus on perfection and beauty; attention to detail and a sense of realism. It might seem that realism and perfection would be

in conflict, but this was not the case. The Greeks admired perfect forms, such as idealised bodies. What was being painted or sculpted was perfect. The realism was in the presentation - how the form was being shown. So greater three-dimensionality and more natural postures and stances for bodies in statues added realism. This, combined with attention to detail, had an enduring influence on Western art that still lives on to this day.



The Aphrodite of Praxiteles (4th century BCE)





Discus is still an Olympic sport today

## Olympic events

### Sprint

**Skills required:** Speed, acceleration and strength and stamina when in armour  
**Is it still an Olympic event?** Yes, though neither naked nor in armour

### Horse and chariot racing

**Skills required:** Horsemanship, courage and good funding  
**Is it still an Olympic event?** There are equestrian events, but not races - or chariots

### Discus

**Skills required:** Strength and coordination  
**Is it still an Olympic event?** Yes

### Boxing

**Skills required:** Strength, stamina and courage  
**Is it still an Olympic event?** Yes, though unlike the Greeks we use padded gloves

### Pentathlon

**Skills required:** All the athletic skills, plus stamina and courage  
**Is it still an Olympic event?** Yes, although the individual events have changed

## The perfect body

In any major Greek settlement there would be images of the perfect body in all the public spaces: in statues, carved on walls and even tombs, painted on walls and crockery. It was fed by their obsessive concern for symmetry and proportion, as seen in their architecture. Every place of substance would also have gymnasias. For the well-off (male) citizen hiring a personal trainer, watching your diet and exercising to look good were essential. We have celebrity and fitness magazines instead of public art. It seems very modern, but in fact it's quite Greek. However, there was a more serious note to their exercise, because they were also preparing to fight in battle. The physical and mental demands of hoplite warfare would hardly have been possible without this preparation.

## Sport

In Greece, the hunt for physical perfection and their extreme competitiveness created a new, everlasting spectator event...

**05** Greek athletes were celebrities and adored to an extent that would make us blush. Winning an Olympic victory for your city would bring glory, popularity, a head start in politics if you wanted it, and even a statue. Rich citizens would compete to spend the most on preparing contestants - such as lavishing money on chariots, horses and trainers. Make no mistake, though; it was the winning that counted. Cheating and sharp practice were not unknown and could create lasting controversy and ill-feeling, while injuries and deaths were an accepted part of the fighting events. What's more - much like now - star athletes could be persuaded to represent other, richer cities.

Although we focus on the Olympics, sport and exercise were part of daily life for male Greeks, as well as young female Spartans. In fact, sport and exercise were part of what made the Greeks different from their neighbours, and they recognised and celebrated this fact.

The Olympic Games, traditionally said to have begun in 776 BCE and always held at Olympia, were only open to adult Greek-speaking males. At first, the Olympics lasted a single day and comprised a

single event, a foot race akin to today's 200-metre sprint. Over time, events grew, matching those commonly pursued in the Greek cities, although some - chariot racing, above all - were only for the very rich, or those funded by the very rich. They resembled military exercises, sometimes obsolete ones as with the chariots.

The games were eventually held over a full five days. Team events were rare, because for the Greeks the essence of sport was individual contest and personal victory. Events included foot, horse and chariot races; discus and javelin throw; the long jump; wrestling; boxing; a pentathlon; and pankration, a combination of wrestling and boxing. Athletes trained in a quite modern way, except that they were often naked, as they would be in many of the contests. As with the modern Olympics, the prize for victory was a token, an olive wreath, but only the winner was recognised - there was no prize for coming second.

Many of our sporting words, including 'athletics', 'athlete', 'gymnastics', 'gymnasium', 'stadium', 'hippodrome' and - of course - 'Olympics' come from Greek, suggesting just how much modern sport owes to them.







## Literature

The Greeks established many of the genres of Western literature

### 04

The first written Western literature was the *Iliad*, a Greek heroic poem probably written in the 8th century BCE. Lyric and elegiac poetry - originally set to music from the lyre and the flute, respectively - were Greek creations. The Athenians alone established two dramatic genres, tragedy and comedy (in two different styles), while the philosopher Aristotle codified dramatic principles in his influential *Poetics*. The Greeks also wrote novels, ornamental speeches and were the first people to write history; Herodotus was the first historian of any sort, while Thucydides was the first modern-seeming historian.

Only a small portion of Greek literature has survived, but what has - such as the epic poems of Homer, the tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, the comedies of Aristophanes and Menander - is still read today, both in Greek and in translation.

## Education

The Athenians anticipated the widespread literacy and universities of modern democracies, while Spartans inspired totalitarian regimes with their fiercely regimented state schooling

### 03

As with so many other things, Athens and Sparta educated their children in very different ways. Other Greeks had various approaches, but most were closer to the Athenians, and by the late 4th century BCE, the Athenian way was widespread. One belief they all shared was that education's purpose was to produce good citizens.

In Sparta, a good citizen meant being a good soldier. Boys were taken from their families at seven, lived in communal barracks and were subjected to ferocious discipline and military training. Perhaps uniquely among Ancient Greeks, girls were also educated, again with an emphasis on physical and mental toughness.

In Athens, physical training was also important, but there was much more emphasis on literacy and culture. It is thought that a higher proportion

of adult male citizens could read and write in 5th- and 4th-century BCE Athens than in any modern European state until the 20th century. This reflected the requirements and ambitions of an active democracy. Most Athenian boys probably only had a few years of formal education, but the well-to-do wanted more to help them compete and excel in public life.

In the 5th and 4th centuries BCE, higher education developed, incorporating elements of new thinking - philosophy, mathematics and the like - although the early focus was on teaching 'cleverness', especially rhetorical tricks.

In time, schools such as those founded by philosophers like Plato and Aristotle offered a more purely educational approach, providing the blueprint for modern universities. Academia and academics are named after Plato's school, the Academy, founded in Athens in around 387 BCE.

Athenian boys were taught reading and writing, music, maths and philosophy



## Maths

The Greeks didn't invent maths, but they did have a lot of Eureka! moments

**02** Mathematics is a Greek word for 'that which is learned'. Pythagoras, a semi-legendary and eccentric figure from the island of Samos - he was a vegetarian who forbade his followers from eating beans - is said to have invented the word, and much else besides. How much of this is true we can't know, but it's hard to dispute that many of the terms, concepts and classical problems current in maths today come from the Greeks, especially in the field of geometry. Euclid is often called the 'father of geometry', while Thales and Pythagoras' theorems are fundamental. Although pi had already been calculated approximately in the Near and Far East, the first recorded mathematician to calculate it rigorously was the Greek Archimedes, in around 250 BCE. Even where Greek mathematicians were unable to answer questions themselves, they were often asking ones that would prove fruitful for mathematicians for millennia to come.



Pythagoras shared his knowledge with his students

## Great Greek philosophers

### Socrates

A poor Athenian, he was a famously tough soldier during the wars against Sparta. He was sentenced to death for 'introducing new gods' to Athens and corrupting youth through his ideas, and famously died by voluntarily drinking hemlock. Socrates didn't leave any written documents, but his legacy came through his pupils, especially Plato.

**"The unexamined life is not worth living"**

### Plato

Born in the 420s BCE to a wealthy aristocratic Athenian family, he died in the mid 4th century. He tried to turn Dionysius, the ruler of Syracuse, into a 'philosopher-king', but was sold into slavery for his pains, though he was quickly bought and freed by an admirer. He founded the famous Academy.

**"Ignorance, the root and stem of every evil"**

### Aristotle

Aristotle (384-322 BCE) was born in northern Greece, but educated from the age of 18 in Athens at Plato's Academy. He returned north to act as the future Alexander the Great's tutor for several years, before returning to Athens to found his own school, the Lyceum.

**"Plato is dear to me, but dearer still is truth"**



## Philosophy

Greek philosophers didn't only invent their own subject; they also invented science

**01** The word philosophy comes from the Greek for 'love of wisdom', and is said to have first been used by Pythagoras.

The Greeks didn't differentiate between what we would think of as science and philosophy, and many philosophers were chiefly concerned with physics, speculating on the nature of the universe. Famously, Democritus (c.460-370 BCE) expounded an early version of atomic theory. Plato is said to have despised Democritus to such an extent that he wanted to burn all his writings!

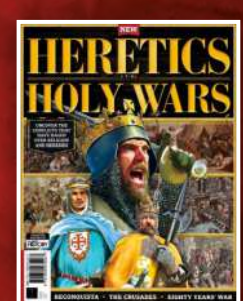
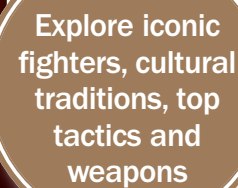
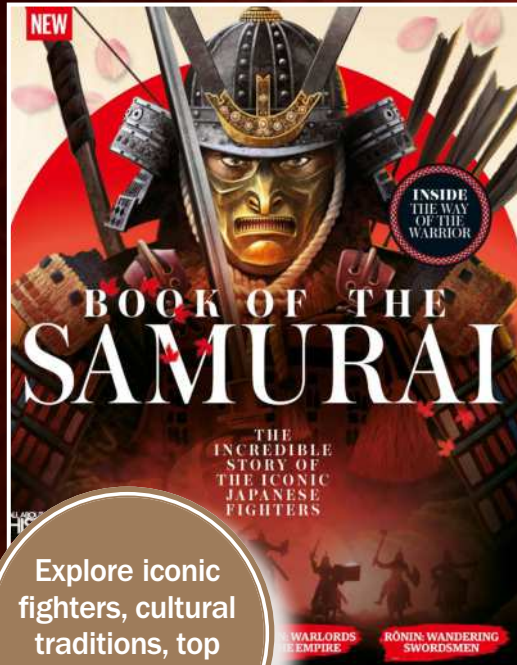
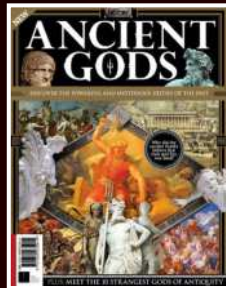
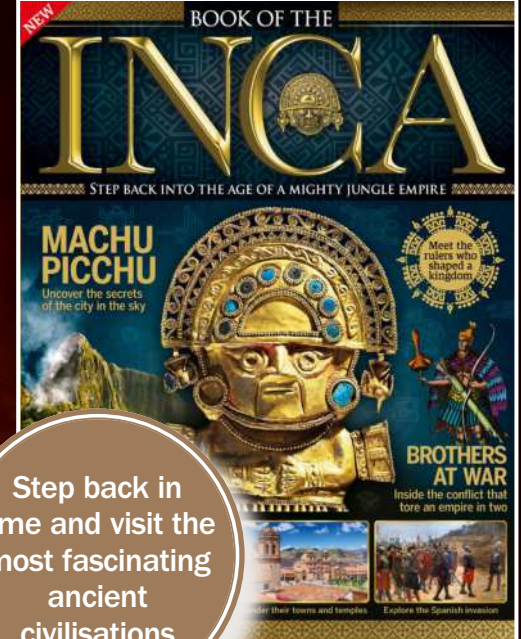
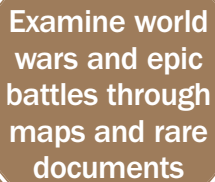
It wasn't until Socrates that subjects with humankind as their focus, such as ethics, became fully recognised philosophical concerns. Socrates also developed the dialectical method - roughly, question and answer with an emphasis on discovering true or false statements and definitions - which has been hugely influential in many fields. What we think of

as 'critical thinking' owes much to Socrates, who made many enemies by challenging lazy beliefs and conventional wisdom, often with mischievous humour.

Plato was a pupil of Socrates, while Aristotle was a pupil of Plato's. Plato's interests were widespread, but his greatest concern - the subject for his masterpiece, *The Republic* - was justice. His belief in the interconnectedness of things led him to state that justice could only be seen in a just state, for him a sort of philosopher's version of Sparta, which influenced later totalitarian political thinking. Aristotle was more of a pragmatist and observer, a forerunner of social scientists in some ways, as well as physical scientists.

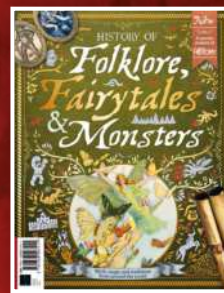
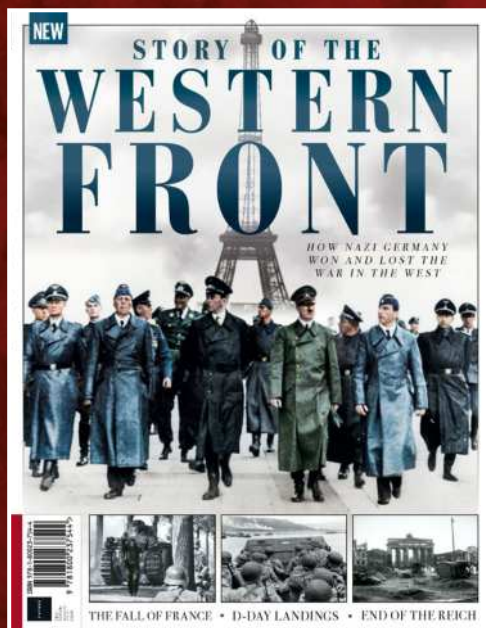
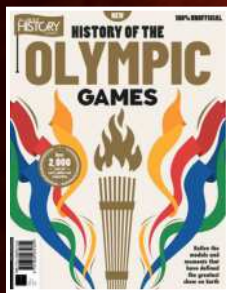
Other major movements included Epicureanism, Stoicism and Cynicism, all of which have spawned words in the English language based on simplified (and somewhat misleading) versions of their teachings.





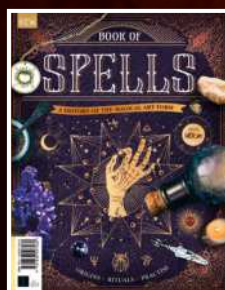
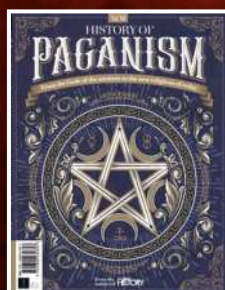
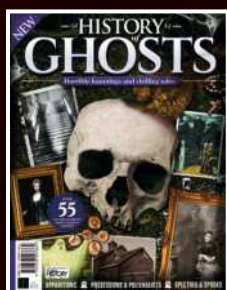
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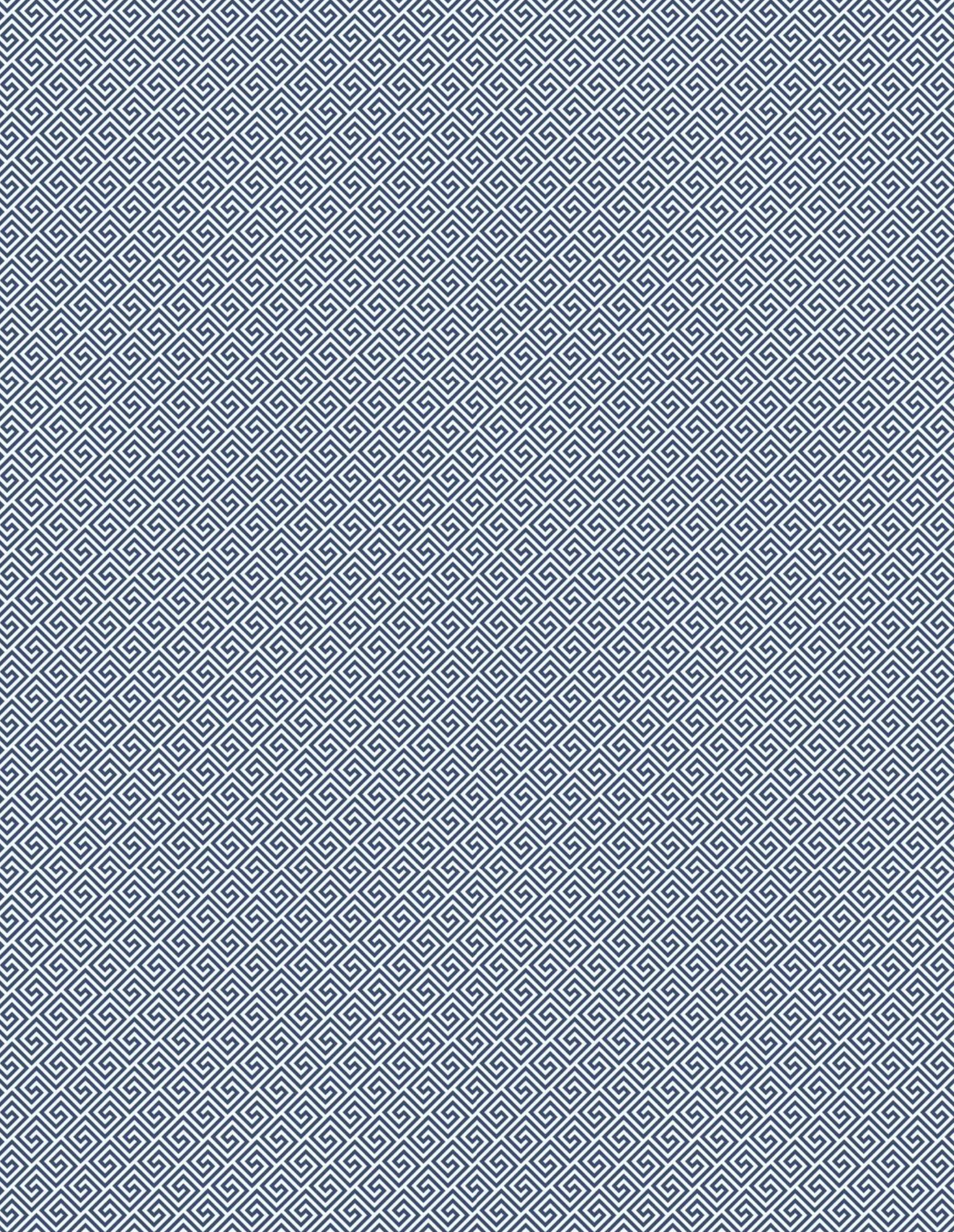
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